THE PUBLIC CAREER OF
ELBRIDGE GERRY

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CHAPTER I
Origins of the Revolution, 1772-1776

Elbridge Gerry was born on July 17, 1744 in Marblehead, Massachusetts, the third of twelve children born to Thomas and Elizabeth Gerry. Thomas Gerry was born in Devonshire, England, in 1713, and came to New England in 1740 as master of a merchant vessel. Here he met and married Elizabeth Greenleaf, the daughter of a prominent merchant. Marblehead at that time was an important commercial town and Thomas Gerry built up a prosperous business as a cod fisherman and general merchant.

Elbridge, as a member of a well-to-do middle-class family, entered Harvard where he had an unspectacular career and was graduated in the upper half of the class of 1762. After leaving college, he worked in the offices of Gerry & Company learning the trade of merchant. Politics were not neglected, however, in favor of business, and Elbridge was prominent enough in the colonial dispute with England to be elected to the General Court (Massachusetts' colonial assembly) in 1772.

Elbridge Gerry was short in stature and slight in build. His fashionable dress was neat and dapper without being foppish or ornate. A rather high pitched nasal twang marred his speaking voice, making it unpleasing in private conversation and public address. This handicap combined with a long, laboring and repetitious writing and speaking style, did not help his public career. Such a lack of facility in communicating ideas may have been caused by an interest in dry economic affairs or by his training in the Continental Congress where policy decisions were rarely reached in open debate.

Gerry's personal life was on a high social level. He drank moderately and rarely indulged in amusements except the theater. His manners were formal and polite with both men and women. Elmwood, an estate purchased after the Revolution from the state, which had confiscated it from a Tory, was the scene of soirees and dinner parties. He liked having young people around and catered particularly to Harvard students, one of whom, James Austin, became his son-in-law and biographer. Not until 1786 did Gerry marry, and then he wed seventeen-year-old Ann Thompson, the daughter of a New York merchant. Seven children were born by 1796, and the responsibilities of a large family and a chronically ill wife bore heavily on him.
Elbridge Gerry earned his living as a merchant until his death in 1814. Most of the time he dealt in general merchandise: West Indies produce (sugar and coffee), salt for New England's fishing industry, lumber, flour and meat. Cod fishing was the basis for the family's fortune. Prosperity was not permanent, however, and heavy financial losses, caused in part by brother Samuel Gerry's reverses after 1800, forced Elbridge to remain active in business when probably he would have welcomed retirement. Jefferson's embargo nearly wiped him out, and the family was not left in good financial shape when he died.

In religion, Gerry was Episcopalian. While devout and believing firmly in God and the need for religion, he did not permit it to dominate his life. He felt that the Church had a function to perform in society but that did not include politics or public affairs.

Much had happened in the decade preceding Gerry's entry into public life. Fundamentally the great problem for America and Britain in the period following 1763 was one of reconciling centralized imperial control with colonial home rule. The British position was based on the theory of mercantilism, a philosophy which considered a colony as a subordinate entity existing primarily for the benefit of the mother country. In keeping with this belief,
George Grenville, Chief Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer, caused Parliament to pass the Stamp Act; reorganized the customs system for the purpose of stopping widespread smuggling; and overhauled the civil and military administrations to make them more efficient so that the tax moneys provided for under the Stamp Act would not be wasted.

The colonists naturally resisted these encroachments on their commercial activities and their sense of independence which had developed during the wars with the French and Indians. A boycott of British goods, a solemn assertion of the right to be free from parliamentary taxation and mass protests against British "oppression" convinced the Crown that Grenville's system was unworkable.

The resulting relaxation of British pressure was only temporary. Charles Townshend succeeded Grenville as

2. H.S. Commager (ed.), Documents of American History (P.S. Crofts, New York, 1943), 53, 59-60 prints the main parts of Grenville's system: Sugar Act, Stamp Act, Quartering Act, and the Declaratory Act which was passed to confirm Parliament's right to tax the colonies after Grenville's system was abandoned.

Chancellor of the Exchequer and tried his own system of imperial organization. Townshend reinstated the principles of Grenville's system with the significant exception that he collected the taxes at the port of entry thereby avoiding the American charge that Parliament was unduly meddling in internal colonial affairs. Enforcement of the new system was provided for by special search warrants, called writs of assistance, and by special vice-admiralty courts whose judges were paid by the Crown, thereby obviating the colonial assemblies' favorite device of controlling intractable officials by holding up their salaries.

The dispute over whether the Crown or the colony should pay judges' salaries brought Elbridge Gerry into contact with Samuel Adams, the chief instigator of the American Revolution. The problem was debated in the Marblehead committee of correspondence and Gerry drafted the remonstrance which went to Adams and the Boston committee. Gerry's warm support of Adams's radical views at this time was welcome to the older man, for the relaxation of Townshend's system had robbed him of much of his political thunder, and most people had little interest in who paid

\[\text{The key Townshend measure is printed in Commager (ed.), Documents of American History, 61.}\]
judges' salaries. Gerry was pleased with Adams's encouraging reply to his remonstrance and began a correspondence with him that ended only with the latter's death. On the question of an independent judiciary, the young political tyro had definite views which he soon made known to Adams. He deplored the English attempts to tamper with the courts "...as it is no longer a matter of doubt", he wrote, "that the Crown's ministers are determined to deprive us of our constitutional rights and by that ulterior object get at our property." Gerry also had a sound method of solving the problem. He noted that judges in the Marblehead area were not accepting British pay because the town committee had persuaded them not to do so. This happy situation had been brought about by calling all of the judges together and "laying down the law". Why, Gerry asked Adams, could not public opinion, the threat of social ostracism and the prospect of economic ruin be used to compel all judges, but particularly those in the commercial towns, to refuse payment from the Crown? The only way that pressure could

5. Schlesinger, The Colonial Merchants, 244-248; Adams to Gerry, Oct. 25, 1772, Gerry-Adams Papers, New York Public Library. (Hereafter abbreviated as NYPL.)
6. Gerry to S. Adams, Oct. 27, 1772, quoted in James Austin, The Life of Elbridge Gerry (White & Lilly, Boston, 1829, 2 vols.), 1, 6. (Hereafter cited as Austin, Gerry.)
7. Nov. 2, 1772, Gerry-Adams Papers, NYPL.
be exerted on the judges was to organize closely-knit and politically reliable committees of correspondence and to abandon any hope of accomplishing anything through written petitions for redress. Adams agreed with Gerry's views on the committees, but the colonial non-importation agreement, formed to counter the Townshend Acts, had been suspended after the repeal of the British measures and most Americans were showing little interest in political organizations.

Gerry's enthusiastic support of Adams's radical views caused him in one instance to get ahead of his mentor. When, late in 1772, two additional British regiments were brought into Boston, the implied threat caused Gerry to draft a fiery proclamation in which he demanded withdrawal of the troops, local self government, free trade and colonial control of Crown officials. Copies of the Marblehead manifesto were sent to Adams along with a covering letter in which Gerry recommended a strong show of force to let England know that the colonists meant business. This was going too far and too fast for Adams, because although Gerry's extreme views were shared by the indefatigable Sam, 

8. Gerry to S. Adams, Nov. 20, 1772, ibid.
10. Gerry to Adams, Dec. 16, 1772, Gerry-Adams Papers, NYPL.
public opinion did not support such extremism.\textsuperscript{11}

The winter of 1772-1773 was spent in forming new committees of correspondence and in propaganda work against British insistence on an independent judiciary. By spring, however, these points had lost most of their popular appeal and the radical cause was threatening to wither away\textsuperscript{12} when Parliament passed the Tea Act.\textsuperscript{13} This attempt of the British government to solve the financial troubles of the East India Company at the expense of the colonial merchants gave new life to the revolutionary movement.

Sam Adams, again supplied with good propaganda material, queried his Marblehead friend, among many others, regarding the expediency of reviving the intercolonial committee system.\textsuperscript{14} The responses were favorable and Adams asked the General Court to establish a standing committee "...to communicate with his Majesty's ancient colony of Virginia and such others as may be interested to enlist uniform

\begin{enumerate}
\item S. Adams to Gerry, Dec. 18, 1772, Gerry-Adams Papers, NYPL.
\item Despite the strict enforcement of the navigation laws, which reduced smuggling to its lowest point since 1733, the colonial merchants were prosperous. See Dora Clarke, "British Opinion and the American Revolution" (Yale Press, New Haven, 1930), Chap. II.
\item The Tea Act repealed English export duties but retained American import duties of 3-pence per pound on tea. British tea was cheaper than tea smuggled in from Holland. See James Hosmer, Samuel Adams (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1896), 234-236 and John Miller, Sam Adams: Pioneer in Propaganda, (Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1936), Chap. XI.
\item Gerry to Adams, May 4, 1773, Gerry-Adams Papers, NYPL.
\end{enumerate}
means of faithfully fulfilling Parliament's orders..."\textsuperscript{15}
The Assembly approved Adams's request, and twenty-nine-year-old Elbridge Gerry, serving in only his second term in the General Court—which had over 200 members—was elected to the twenty-three man committee.\textsuperscript{16}

This recognition of his talents and zeal encouraged Gerry to propose to Adams a sound method of reconciling English-colonial differences. Lord North and the King's friends, Gerry reasoned, were dealing with the American colonies without due regard for English constitutional law. In order to set things aright, Gerry believed that the House of Commons should enact a continental constitution would explicitly define the relationship of the colonies to the mother country. In this system, the House of Commons was to be supreme and the King, Cabinet and all appointed officials were to work through Commons. Meanwhile, in the colonies, the provincial assemblies and officials were to carry out all powers not expressly denied to them by the continental constitution.\textsuperscript{17} What Gerry proposed was a nineteenth-century dominion or home-rule system which would

\textsuperscript{15} Adams to Gerry, May 24, 1773, Gerry-Adams Papers, NYPL.
\textsuperscript{16} For the mechanics of Gerry's election on Adams's recommendation see Austin, Gerry, I, 28-29; and Adams to James Warren, June 5, 1773, Gerry-Adams Papers, NYPL.
\textsuperscript{17} Gerry to Adams, June 21, 1773, Gerry-Adams Papers, NYPL.
be subject to Parliamentary supervision, but not to royal vetoes. Unfortunately for all concerned, he was a century ahead of his time. Gerry was no idealistic dreamer, however, because when practicalities ruled out the adoption of his scheme, he dropped it completely. Still, the plan is significant and worthy of note, for a year after Gerry proposed it, he and Sam Adams were branding Joseph Galloway as an insufferable conservative for presenting a similar plan to the first Continental Congress.

With the town and colonial committees welded into a strong and reliable organization as a result of the agitation against the Tea Act, the tempo of rebellion increased. In fact, there is reason to believe that "Adams and Co." became determined in 1773, two years before the Battle of Lexington, to have a showdown fight with England as soon as public opinion favored such action. This assertion is borne out by the extensive measures undertaken by the Massachusetts committee. One of these was a violent personal attack against Governor Thomas Hutchinson for letters that he wrote to the Board of Trade in 1768-1769 in which he advocated the use of force to compel the colonies to accept a subordinate

16. James Warren to Gerry, June 29, 1773, Gerry-Adams Papers, NYPL, explained the the Governor was cool to the idea.
role in relation to England. Gerry took a prominent part in the debates on these letters in the General Court and revealed a radical viewpoint that allowed propaganda considerations to overshadow the strict truth. So well-organized and so virulent were the attacks that Hutchinson asked the court to censure Gerry and dissolve the colonial and town committees, but such recommendations could hardly pass because most of the members of the Court were also leaders in the committees.

Meanwhile, beneath the open political fireworks, practical preparations were being made for armed rebellion. Thomas Cushing let the hint of war drop in a letter to Gerry:

"I am desired," Cushing wrote, "to have you attend a meeting to consider writing to committees of correspondence in other provincial governments to agree on one form of conduct that may be made by the colonies in case of war."

The overt act which carried the Revolution from the talking stage into the action phase took place on December 16, 1773 when a band of men disguised as Indians boarded three

19. Hosmer, Samuel Adams, 220-221; Austin, Gerry, 30-31; Gerry to James Warren, Sept. 8, 1773, Gerry Papers, Library of Congress. (Hereafter abbreviated as LC.)
20. Adams to Gerry, Oct. 8, 1773, Gerry Papers, LC.
21. Cushing was a member of the First Continental Congress and of the original delegation to the Second Congress; he is also well known for his excellent work as a state judge after 1776.
22. Austin, Gerry, I, 29-30.
British East India ships lying in the harbor at Boston and threw nearly 16,000 pounds worth of tea into the water. Remember that this outrage took place at a time when men were being hanged in England for stealing a loaf of bread. Although the provocation to England was undoubtedly planned by the Adams-Gerry type of radical, Gerry's role in the high-handed act is not clear. Surely his words and deeds, both public and private, encouraged violence, but the Marblehead leader probably deplored violence except as a last resort. Since he was a middle-class merchant, he probably suffered some pangs of conscience at the thought of all that sacrosanct private property being disposed of without due process of law.

Parliament acted quickly and harshly to the Boston Tea Party by passing the so-called Intolerable Acts. This show of force, intended to overawe the colonists, required a large army to be carried out effectively, but the troops were not available. As a result, Adams had good propaganda material for further radical acts while England was

committed to a policy which she could not adequately enforce.

When news of the passage of the repressive laws reached Boston, Elbridge Gerry was temporarily in public disfavor. Marblehead suffered from a smallpox epidemic during the spring of 1774, and Gerry, with several others, built a hospital to give free inoculations to everyone. Certain rooms, however, were reserved for "gentlemen", and because of that social distinction, a mob, no doubt aroused by the liberty doctrines being preached by the radicals, burnt the hospital to the ground. Gerry and the entire Marblehead committee of correspondence promptly resigned.\textsuperscript{24} As a result, Sam Adams was without his right bower in Marblehead when the Port of Boston was closed to all ships, including those bringing in food and medicine.

When Adams finally persuaded Gerry to assist in the relief of Boston and thereby brought him back into public life, the young politician stated his opinion of the hospital fiasco in no uncertain terms. "Such violence", he wrote to Adams, "hurts our cause. How can we expect to convince anyone of our ability to rule ourselves when mobs can destroy private property at will? Property is sacred and must remain the fundamental consideration in our thinking."\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{24} Austin, \textit{Gerry}, I, 40-41; Gerry to Adams, May 21, 1774, Gerry-Adams Papers, NYPL.
\textsuperscript{25} May 31, 1774, Gerry Papers, LC.
Gerry also felt that protection of property was a primary reason for American agitation for home rule when he accepted an appointment from the General Court to gather food and supplies for Boston. "The point of this dispute", he wrote to James Warren, "is whether Americans shall enjoy the fruits of their labor, or send them in taxes to Great Britain, whether they shall happily maintain their families by the proceeds of their industry, or remit them to Great Britain to maintain pensioners in luxury." 26

Gerry played an important part in the relief of Boston during the summer of 1774. Although the Suffok County committee had overall control of the relief work, Marblehead was designated as a collection center for supplies being sent from nearly all the colonies. Food, medicines, and arms and ammunition passed through the hands of the Marblehead committee for Boston. The work was nerve wracking, tedious and thankless, but Gerry selflessly put the people's needs before his own political ambitions. 27 As a result, he was not on the delegation to the First Continental Congress which

26. To Adams, May 31, Gerry-Adams Papers, NYPL.
27. Hundreds of people worked in the relief program. See "Correspondence in 1774 and 1775 Between A Committee of the Town of Boston and the Contributors of Donations for the Relief of the Sufferers of the Boston Port Bill", Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, 4th Series, IV (1858), 1-278.
met at Philadelphia during September-October, 1774.

Although Gerry had little to do directly with the First Continental Congress, some consideration must be given here to the deliberations of that body. All of the colonies, except Georgia, sent delegates to Philadelphia to consider ways and means of dealing with the Intolerable Acts. Sam and John Adams, John Hancock, James Bowdoin and Thomas Cushing made up the Massachusetts delegation, and also the radical leadership of the Congress. They soon realized that outside of Richard Henry Lee and his fellow delegates from Virginia there was scant support for an armed rebellion or a declaration of independence. 29

The early sessions were taken up with consideration of Joseph Galloway's Plan which was a conservative attempt to reach a moderate and middle-of-the-road settlement of Anglo-American differences. Galloway proposed establishment of a colonial legislature, representing every province, with power to legislate for the colonies in cooperation with Parliament. The Plan was, at least, a concrete talking point for further discussion, but Adams and the radicals wanted action, not talk. A motion to postpone debate was

28. The standard one-volume work on both Congresses is E.C. Burnett, The Continental Congress (MacMillan Co., New York, 1941). For the First Congress see Chap. III.

barely adopted, and the propaganda mill turned out such
dire threats of physical violence against Galloway that he
did not dare call for further debate on his scheme.\textsuperscript{30}

Radicalism took control of the Congress when the fiery
resolves of Suffolk County, Massachusetts, were adopted.
These resolutions, protesting British military measures and
alleged violations of charter rights, were instigated by
Sam Adams.\textsuperscript{31} Essex County, where Marblehead was located,
also sent a set of resolves, but Elbridge Gerry did not sup­
ply his political mentor with much political ammunition. Nor
is there much evidence of his having influenced the drafting
of the Declaration of Rights and the non-trade Association.\textsuperscript{32}

While the Continental Congress was winding up its busi­
ness, the political pot was boiling in Massachusetts.
Governor Thomas Gage issued a call on September 1, 1774 for
the towns to send representatives to Salem for a special
meeting of the General Court. Four weeks later Gage can­
celled the call giving as his reasons "...the many tumults
and disorders..., the extraordinary resolves which have been
passed in many of the counties and the radical instructions

\textsuperscript{30} Text of Galloway Plan is in Commager, Documents
of American History, 81-82. For Adams's op­
opposition see Miller, Sam Adams, 320-323.

\textsuperscript{31} Journals of Each Provincial Congress of Massa­
chusetts (Dutton and Wentworth, Boston, 1635),
III-115.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 123-124; Adams to Gerry, Sept. 8, 1774 and
Gerry's reply of Sept. 21, Gerry Papers, LC.
given...to representatives of the Court...." This entirely legal action by the Governor did not stop the radicals. Ninety-four of the approximately 145 members elected to the General Court met at Salem in defiance of the Governor's orders and asked him to change his mind about convening the assembly. Gage refused to deal with the rump assembly, but men like Hancock, the Adamses, Joseph Warren and Gerry did not allow legal niceties to stand in their way. A call went out to the town committees of correspondence to hold meetings to elect a full membership to the rump Court on the same basis as the legal Court had been chosen. After the new members arrived in Salem, the illegally constituted body declared itself in session. 34

The first act of the self-styled Provincial Congress was to appoint a seven-man committee, including Elbridge Gerry, to report on the state of the province. The committee originally intended to make an objective study of conditions and draft a well-reasoned and factual report for transmission to Governor Gage, 35 but Sam. Adams exerted his great influence and the final report was a strongly-worded revolutionary

33. Massachusetts Provincial Congress, Journals, 3-4.
34. Ibid., 6-7; Gerry to his brother Samuel, Oct. 9, 1774, Gerry Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. (Hereafter abbreviated as MHS). The same thing happened in several colonies. See Burnett, Continental Congress, 60-61.
35. Massachusetts Provincial Congress, Journals, 16-17. (The three Provincial Congresses met at: Salem, Oct. 1, 1774-Dec. 10; Concord and Cambridge Feb. 1, 1775-May 29, 1775; and Watertown, May 31-July 19, 1775.)
demand for redress of real and alleged oppressions.36 It began with the declaration that the delegates were meeting in a congress to "...concert some remedy for your Gage's repressive measures, to prevent impending ruin and to provide for public safety."37 These aims were important, the committee asserted, because the British were obviously intending to use the colonial government to ruin the people rather than to help them. This charge was probably the key point of the entire report because for men like Gerry and Adams the state existed for the benefit of the individual and ruled only enough to guarantee the broadest possible individual freedom. The remainder of the remonstrance dealt with taxation without representation, payment of the salaries of royal officials and rights of colonial assemblies, all of which were old propaganda arguments.

The Provincial Congress probably did not expect the report to cause Governor Gage to relent and recognize the Congress for it assumed the powers of the colonial General Court and began to exercise them immediately. Tax assessors and collectors, sheriffs and all other persons possessing public funds were ordered to pay them only on the order

36. S. Adams to Gerry, Oct. 10, 1774, Gerry-Adams Papers, NYPL. (This letter is marked "copy" and apparently had a fairly wide distribution.)
of the Provincial Congress. The annual taxes, then due for immediate collection, were continued by the Congress which threatened legal action against defaulters. And a special committee was appointed to "...consider the state of the army; and to propose means of supplying and increasing same...."\(^{38}\) These were certainly bold and sweeping assumptions of authority for an illegally assembled Court to exercise. Furthermore, when they are considered along with the aggressive nature of the relief work being done for beleaguered Boston, the radical policies add up to a full-fledged rebellion which needed only the smell of gunpowder to make it official.

Gerry was outstanding in carrying out the acts of the Provincial Congress. He contacted the sheriff and tax official in Essex County and persuaded them not to turn public funds over to the Crown officials.\(^{39}\) The non-trade Association was strictly enforced in Marblehead which soon became known as a "death trap" for English goods.\(^{40}\) In addition to this work, Gerry traveled widely to find and purchase military supplies for the militia and civilian supplies for

\(^{38}\) Massachusetts Provincial Congress, Journals, 21.
\(^{39}\) Gerry to Adams, Nov. 19, 1774, Gerry-Adams Papers, NYPL.
\(^{40}\) Warren to Gerry, Dec. 27, 1774, Gerry Papers, Pennsylvania Historical Society. (Hereafter abbreviated as PHS.)
Boston. These duties took so much of his time that he was not appointed to either of the executive committees set up by the Provincial Congress before it adjourned.\textsuperscript{41}

When, in February 1775, the Congress reconvened, Gerry was appointed to the reorganized Committee of Supply along with the top leaders of Massachusetts radicalism: the Adamses, James Warren, Hancock, Cushing and Robert Treat Paine. Since these men, except Gerry, had spent most of their time in Boston and Philadelphia, they lacked first-hand experience with the supply situation. As a result, the able and energetic Gerry was the most important member of the committee when it came to implementing policy decisions.\textsuperscript{42}

While the Americans were preparing for a showdown fight, Governor and Major General Thomas Gage was not letting them win by default. Troops were brought in from England and the West Indies, and strong patrols searched the countryside for illegal caches of military stores. One of these patrols gave Gerry quite a scare. One evening, shortly before the Battle of Lexington, a British detachment came to the farmhouse where Gerry was spending the night. While the English officer was banging on the front entrance with his sword,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{41} S. Adams to Gerry, Dec. 30, 1774, Gerry Papers, PHS.
\textsuperscript{42} The entire journal of the committee is printed in Massachusetts Provincial Congress, \textit{Journals}, 660 ff.
\end{flushright}
Gerry, clad only in his nightshirt, scurried out the back door. The search was only for supplies, however, and the officer did not go into the nearby field where Gerry was shivering in the cold night air.\textsuperscript{43} If he had, there is little doubt that the well-known rebel named Elbridge Gerry would have wound up in prison instead of in the front ranks of the American Revolution. The incident is important for another reason. Apparently the Americans' military measures had convinced Gage that open hostilities were about to begin, for the use of armed patrols to search private homes was a great violation of the individual liberties so near and dear to the hearts of all Englishmen.

As was almost inevitable, one of Gage's detachments met armed resistance and the "shot heard around the world" was fired at Lexington on April 19, 1775. With the reconvening of the Second Continental Congress to prosecute the war, Gerry's time was divided between matters concerned with Continental problems and those dealing with Massachusetts affairs. Included in the latter category were: the gathering of supplies; the organization of Massachusetts as a state; the issuance of letters of marque; and the expediency of a declaration of independence.

\textsuperscript{43} Austin, \textit{Gerry}, I, 71-72.
Finding and purchasing supplies of gunpowder for the Massachusetts militia was Gerry's first task after the outbreak of hostilities. The Provincial Congress had added a special committee to gather powder to the standing Committee of Supply; but with a majority of the committee in Philadelphia as delegates to the Second Continental Congress, most of the responsibility fell on Gerry. It could not have fallen into better hands, and the Provincial Congress recognized that fact by giving him carte blanche powers in these sweeping terms: "You are desired, if powder is to be found in any part of America to procure it in any such way or manner as you shall think best, and we shall confirm whatever you shall do relative to this matter."  

Closely related to the gunpowder problem was that of supplying the 15,000-man Massachusetts militia. Tent cloth, canteens, muskets, uniforms and rations are topics that fill Gerry's correspondence with Provincial and Continental Congress leaders. And until the Continental Congress began to coordinate the efforts of the several colonies, Gerry, acting as representative for Massachusetts, travelled to New


45. Massachusetts Provincial Congress, Journals, 668.

46. See the correspondence with Adams, Hancock, Warren, Cushing and many others, June-August, 1775, Gerry Papers, LC and MHS.
York, Vermont, Rhode Island and Connecticut to beg or borrow men, supplies and money.\textsuperscript{47}

With Massachusetts receiving some support for her military effort around Boston, Gerry was able to devote time to the struggle to determine whether Massachusetts should and could organize as a free and independent state. The Provincial Congress debated the point, and appointed a committee, of which Gerry was a member, to lay the matter before the Continental Congress.\textsuperscript{48} When that august body refused to rule on the question of independence, the radicals acted on their own initiative and began drafting a state constitution. Such bold action was, of course, under the direct control of Sam Adams, with Gerry acting as a spokesman for the Father of the Revolution. Thus the young Marblehead leader was prominent in the movement to have Massachusetts assert her independence, a move which led directly to the declaration of July 4, 1776.\textsuperscript{49}

Gerry was influential in starting naval operations. Being closely connected with the sea, he naturally thought of using privateers to prey on British shipping. The obstacle

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{47} Gerry to Warren, July 18, 1775, Gerry Papers, LC; Massachusetts Provincial Congress, \textit{Journals}, 229-230.
\item \textsuperscript{48} Gerry to Warren, July 23, 1775, Gerry Papers, LC.
\item \textsuperscript{49} Gerry to S. Adams, June 18 and Adams's reply of July 1; Warren to Gerry, July 3 and Gerry's reply of July 9, 1775, Gerry Papers, LC.
\end{itemize}
to such action was whether Massachusetts could legally issue the letters of marque which were necessary under international law to keep privateersmen from being hanged as pirates. Gerry so vigorously defended his views before the Provincial Congress that it began issuing letters of marque several months before the Continental Congress took similar action. 50

Having presented Gerry activities in Massachusetts, some consideration will now be given to his work in relation to the Continental Congress. This fell into four general areas: the selection of George Washington as commander in chief; the relation of the Congress to state affairs 51; the Arnold-Montgomery invasion of Canada; and Gerry's election to the Continental Congress.

The military and political situations in Massachusetts influenced the selection of Washington as commander in chief of the Continental army. While British troops were concentrating in several states, Massachusetts was the only active theater of operations. That situation was a handicap to Sam Adams when it came to choosing a commander. Although Adams believed that, since his state had fomented the

50. S. Adams to Warren, June 16, 1775 and J. Adams to Gerry, Gerry Papers, LC.

51. The words "state" and "province" are used interchangeably in the contemporary correspondence until after July 4, 1776 when "state" is always used. Massachusetts did not ratify a state constitution until 1780.
rebellion, one of her leaders should be commander in chief, several of the larger states were resenting his leadership, and with a shooting war literally in his back yard, he could not afford to alienate anyone.\textsuperscript{52} So he supported the selection of Washington who, as a Virginian, at least came from a state that had consistently supported Massachusetts in the Continental Congress. Although Gerry had little to do directly with the selection of Washington, John Adams wrote to him "...as the most capable contact that I have at home to present the new commander in chief to the people and the Provincial Congress."\textsuperscript{53} Gerry fully and faithfully supported the choice and planned the ceremony at which Washington formally assumed command.\textsuperscript{54}

Everything did not go smoothly behind the scenes. John Hancock had had delusions of military grandeur and had considered his rank in the Massachusetts militia as

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{52} For the background of Washington's selection see D.S. Freeman, \textit{George Washington}, (MacMillan Co., New York, 1947-52, 6 vols.), III, Chap. XXIV; Charles Martyn, \textit{The Life of Artemas Ward} (Privately printed, New York, 1921), 154-164. Ward was the ranking general in the Massachusetts military establishment. New York and Pennsylvania were particularly hostile to Adams's leadership. J.C. Fitzpatrick, \textit{Washington Himself} (Bobbs Merrill, Indianapolis, 1933), Chap. XXIV asserts that Washington was the only real leader available, but this is not borne out by Adams's letters to Gerry.
  \item \textsuperscript{53} June 12, 1775, Gerry Papers, LC.
  \item \textsuperscript{54} Gerry to S. Adams, July 1, 1775, \textit{ibid.}
\end{itemize}
sufficient recommendation for the command given to Washington. The two Adamses, for the reasons already given, felt otherwise, and Hancock was miffed, to say the least, when they failed to support his nomination on the floor of Congress. Out of this dispute there developed a split in the Massachusetts delegation, a permanent alienation of the Adamses from Hancock, and a political struggle for power which was fought in both the Continental Congress and Massachusetts. Gerry's position in the feud was, of course, with the Adamses.

Washington's appointment, necessary as it was to intercolonial harmony, was not considered by Sam Adams as giving away any of Massachusetts's rights. Washington, the Continental general, was in Massachusetts to direct the operations of an army consisting largely of state militia. Under the military system of the time this meant that staff and general officers had to be chosen who were acceptable to the Massachusetts militia, or rather to Sam Adams. Thus the wily Sam, while losing the big prize, was able to dictate the choice of Washington's chief subordinates. "Charles Lee

55. J. Adams to Gerry, July 6, 1775, Gerry Papers, LC; Miller, Sam Adams, 335.
and Horatio Gates", he wrote to Gerry, "are officers of such great experience and confessed abilities that I thought their advice, in a council of officers might be of great advantage to us."\textsuperscript{56} There is also evidence of Adams's refusal to fully accept Washington in a letter to Gerry: "There are at present many military geniuses unemployed, who I hope when the army is new modelled will be much sought after."\textsuperscript{57}

Massachusetts's attitude toward Washington was not based on any personal or political antagonism. There were basic constitutional considerations at stake which Adams rightly felt were fundamental aims of the American Revolution. Chief of these was the sovereignty of the states and the advisory nature of the Continental Congress. Thus if Massachusetts recruited, supplied and officered the militia regiments, then, Adams believed, she should decide how they were employed. So even while Washington was en route to Boston to assume his new command, Gerry and Adams were developing the state-rights view to its limits.\textsuperscript{58}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{56} July 26, 1775, Gerry-Adams Papers, NYPL. (Charles Lee spoiled Washington's attack at Monmouth and Gates was a key figure in the Conway Cabal.)
\item \textsuperscript{57} Sept. 25, 1775, \textit{ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{58} Gerry to Adams, July 1, 1775 and Adams's reply of July 5, 1775, Gerry Papers, PHS; E.C. Burnett, \textit{The Continental Congress}, 99.
\end{itemize}
Gerry was strongly in favor of curtailing Washington's authority over the militia and in maintaining civilian control over the military. He believed that Massachusetts should appoint a five-man board of war to "...advise, consult with and guide the new commander in his difficult tasks...." This view was not based on a fear of military incompetency, for Gerry warned Sam Adams that "history affords abundant instances of established armies making themselves masters of those countries which they were designed to protect...."

The attempt to draw Canada into the American Revolution and the military matters attending the Montgomery-Arnold invasion of Canada in the fall of 1775 formed an important part of Gerry's relations with the Massachusetts delegation in Philadelphia. Like the leaders of the French and Russian Revolutions, the New England delegates wanted to extend their peculiar brand of liberty to "oppressed" people, in this case to the Canadians. The project was supported by the Continental Congress, however, only while Arnold and Montgomery were winning; once the tide of battle turned, the invasion and conquest of Canada became a dead issue. Even then, Adams continued to try to obtain support.

59. Gerry to J. and S. Adams, Sept. 30, 1775, Gerry Papers, LC.
60. Gerry to Warren, Oct. 6, 1775, ibid.
61. Oct. 29, 1775, Gerry-Adams Papers, NYPL.
62. For the background see Burnett, The Continental Congress, Chap. VI.
for another expedition by having Gerry attempt to convince the Provincial Congress that Massachusetts alone could turn the trick. Gerry responded very well, but with little success. Still undaunted, Adams continued his agitation in Philadelphia until only John Adams still supported him. Thus the leader of the Revolution found himself in the uncomfortable political position of being unable to manage his own hand-picked delegation.

The split in the Massachusetts delegation threatened to become permanent when the question of a declaration of independence was debated. The Adamses soon realized that they had to replace either Cushing or Robert Treat Paine with a more reliable delegate if they were to control the delegation. Hancock was equally intractable, of course, but he was too powerful to be ousted without a bitterly fought battle which would only have publicized the shaky nature of the Adamses's right to speak for Massachusetts and New England.

The first hint that Gerry was under consideration as a replacement for Cushing or Paine appears in a letter from John Adams to Gerry: "It is very difficult to be tied

64. S. Adams to Warren, Nov. 19, 1775 and same to Gerry, same date, ibid."
to vacillation and indecision, if not to the opposition of Mr. Cushing while the people cry for independence.\(^65\) Sam. Adams, on the other hand, was far from subtle in showing his displeasure with the recalcitrants. He informed James Warren, the President of the Provincial Congress, that "... you must elect a more amenable person whom we can trust to replace at least one of the present delegation."\(^66\) As a result of this blast, Gerry received nearly all of the votes of the Provincial Congress when it reelected delegates to the Continental Congress.\(^67\)

The significance of Gerry's election can hardly be overestimated. The militants, Gerry and the Adamses, now controlled the Massachusetts delegation and consistently cast its vote for independence and a more vigorous prosecution of the war. And with Massachusetts leading the way, the Southern states and the smaller New England states finally realized that "Adams and Company" really meant business and settled down to fight.\(^68\)


\(^{67}\) Warren to Gerry, Nov. 28, 1775, *ibid*.

\(^{68}\) Curtis Nettels, *George Washington* (Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1948) 146, asserts that Gerry's election was the turning point of the early days of the revolution because of the way it gave Adams a free hand to carry on the war; this writer would hardly go that far.
Chapter II

The Continental Congress, 1776-1785

When Elbridge Gerry took his seat in the Second Continental Congress, he entered a body which made almost inhuman demands on its members. In 1777, for instance, the Journals of Congress reveal that Gerry was on committees for unfinished business, internal enemies, army contracts, military commissions, Danbury prison, hospitals, arms, postoffices, contracts, cornstalks, clothier general, the army, public accounts and military reports. In addition to committee work, the delegates acted in an executive capacity and carried out many laws after they were passed, for Congress exercised both legislative and executive functions and refused to assign much authority to persons who were not delegates. As a result of this situation, the story of Elbridge Gerry's career in Congress is extremely complicated, and in order to present it effectively, it will be presented under the following headings: political views, economic affairs, military matters and foreign policy.

Part I
Political Philosophy

Although Elbridge Gerry left no written political testament, such as Thomas Jefferson did in his First Inaugural Address, he did have a definite political philosophy. The politics of Revolutionary times were motivated by a dynamic middle class which revolted against the then prevailing system of statism. Basically, the Revolution was the work of individuals fighting for the right to function and exist as individuals, which explains why men like Gerry and the Adamses resisted Parliament's arbitrary controls and demanded a written constitution containing specific statements of private and governmental rights, duties and limitations. When Britain refused to grant such a charter, they rebelled; and one of the first acts of nearly every colony after the Battle of Lexington was to draw up a constitution and submit it to the people for approval.  

Gerry did not feel that everyone should exercise equally the right to rule. He believed that political power should rest with persons of talent and wealth. Those people not qualified to hold office or to vote should follow their

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2. For the Massachusetts situation see S.E. Morison, "The Struggle Over the Adoption of the Constitution of Massachusetts", Massachusetts Historical Society, Proceedings, L (1918), 353-401. The voters rejected the constitution the first time because it lacked a bill of rights.

-32-
middle-class leaders and be assured that their interests would be served. The best political order, Gerry believed, was the New England town-meeting type of representative government in which public opinion was solicited and then the leaders made the policy. Such a belief was reasonable for that time since business ability and a strong sense of political noblesse oblige usually meant good government.

Gerry had definite views on the place and function of special classes or groups in political affairs. The Marblehead leader always insisted on complete subordination of military to civil authority. In one instance, when Washington pressed Congress too hard for promotion of certain officers, Gerry observed: "It is the fixed determination of Congress and myself to preserve the civil above the military, and the civil authority will not be surrendered should

3. See Gerry to S. Adams, August 3, 1780, Gerry-Adams Papers, NYPL, at the time the Massachusetts constitution was finally promulgated. Also Gerry's remarks in Congress on July 3, 1779, when popular resentment at inflation of paper money influenced some delegates to demand relief from the Board of Treasury, which Gerry headed. Gerry to J. Adams, July 5, 1779, Gerry Papers, LC.

4. See Gerry's eloquent pleas in 1779 that the United States demand the Newfoundland fisheries from England as a condition of peace. Austin, Gerry, I, 287-288.
it be necessary to disband the army in preserving the same." After the Revolution was won, Gerry pressed for disbandment of the national army to avoid continuation of the excessive taxes necessary to support it. There was a more important reason for Gerry's fear of a national military establishment. During 1784 and 1785, the Order of the Cincinnati, a fraternal group composed of Revolutionary War officers, was making strong demands for pensions, redemption at face value of depreciated pay warrants and cheap land in the West. Gerry hated the aristocratic and exclusive character of the order, and feared that it would carry off a coup and establish an oppressive military dictatorship. Marblehead's representative also strongly opposed religious influences in public affairs, and believed that clergymen should not dabble in politics.

Nor did he look with favor on long terms of office. Annual elections, he believed, gave the voters their best opportunity to control public officials and to prevent continuation of distasteful policies.

8. Gerry to John Wendell, Oct. 8, 1779, Gerry Papers, LC.
9. Gerry even wanted to elect a new secretary for Congress every year. See Burnett, Letters, Continental Congress, VIII, 84-85.
Gerry believed that the best written form of government was the Articles of Confederation. During their drafting, in 1776, the Massachusetts delegate expressed his support of a system of states rights with Congress exercising only definitely stated and sharply circumscribed powers. Included in the powers reserved to the states were control of finances, voting and office-holding qualifications, and military matters as far as supplies were concerned. Thus the real sovereignty remained with the states and was exercised by the state legislatures.

Economically, he rebelled against the then prevailing system of mercantilism. The Marblehead merchant wanted to be free from government controls and regulations, and to have the right to develop, economically, in any way he could. The state was considered only a policemen in the sense that it guaranteed private property, provided impartial laws and kept the peace. A strong central government was

10. Gerry to Warren, May 3, 1776 and April 29, 1776, Gerry Papers, LC.
12. In 1785, during the movement to revise the Articles of Confederation so that Congress could control commerce, Gerry refused to consider even a temporary delegation of such power by the states. See Gerry to S. Adams, July 14, 1785, Gerry Papers, LC.
unnecessary because the states could provide this protection. Of course such reasoning was idealistic in that it assumed that the individual was good, and that what the individual thought was best for himself was also best for society.

Gerry's views on the Declaration of Independence were in keeping with the points already discussed. He interpreted the Declaration as a practical political document. In the field of foreign affairs, he believed that it facilitated negotiation of military alliances and trade treaties with France and Spain; while on the domestic front, it legalized the sale of prizes and other British property, gave validity to the newly-established state governments and protected Americans captured with arms in their hands from execution as rebels. Almost in passing, Gerry noted that the Declaration was a good appeal to the people to rally to the Revolutionary cause; he made scant mention of the democratic implications of Jefferson's masterpiece. 13

Part II
Economic Affairs

By February 1776, when Elbridge Gerry was appointed to a newly-created committee to supervise fiscal affairs,

13. Gerry to Hawley, Feb. 16, 1776, Gerry-Townsend Papers, NYPL; same to Warren, July 12, 1776, ibid., PHS.
Congress had already made the basic decisions which governed Continental finances throughout most of the Revolution. The first, and most important of these, was to issue paper money without making adequate provision for an income in specie to prevent the paper money from depreciating. In fact, no formal study seems to have been made by Congress of the economics of paper money. Instead, it used the funds available for special purposes, such as the purchase of gunpowder and payment of current operating expenses, and, when the cash ran out, began to issue paper notes.

To manage fiscal affairs, Congress appointed a committee consisting of one delegate from each of the thirteen colonies and hired two auditors to handle the bookkeeping. The so-called Board of Treasury had only advisory powers, however, and could not pay even the smallest claim without the approval of Congress. This cumbersome system was the brain-child of Samuel Adams who believed that it was the only way that the states could retain and exercise their sovereign rights to control the pursestrings.

By February 1776, the financial situation was so poor


that Congress had to take action. The unwieldy thirteen-member supervisory committee was replaced by a five-member committee which was charged with "superintending the Treasury". Elbridge Gerry was a member of the original board and remained one until 1780 in a tenure almost unprecedented in Congressional history. The duties of the new Board were to determine ways and means of raising money; employ skilled auditors; examine accounts approved by the auditors and recommend payment or rejection to Congress; instruct persons in the states how to liquidate accounts; superintend the emission of bills of credit; and ascertain the population of the colonies for the purpose of levying a poll tax. Two months after the Board of Treasury was established and charged with the above duties, a special Office of Accounts was organized and placed directly under the Board.

A method of handling accounts was also clearly outlined. Claims were divided into two classes: first, those involving rates or prices definitely set by Congress; and second, those involving rates or prices not set by Congress when the goods or services were ordered. Claims in the first class were presented to the Board of Treasury and

Office of Accounts who reviewed them, made a recommendation to Congress, and if Congress approved, entered them on the books as paid. The claims in the second class were reviewed by the delegates on the Board of Treasury, were reported to Congress, and if allowed by Congress, were paid. Only the delegates passed on these claims. All contracts, securities and obligations were kept in the custody of the Treasury. In general, the Board of Treasury retained this system of auditing and paying accounts until the adoption of the Federal Constitution.

Elbridge Gerry was nearly overwhelmed with paper work during his first year as a member of the Board of Treasury. The rapid depreciation of the paper money made practically impossible any budget or estimate of expenditures and collections, and put purchasing on a hit-and-miss basis. As a result, merchants were reluctant to exchange their goods for a practically worthless currency, and supplies for the army became difficult to obtain even in areas where there was an abundance. The result was a series of appeals to Congressmen from Army officers, commissaries, political leaders and merchants for advice on the thousand-and-one economic problems which arise during a war. The members of the Board of Treasury dealt directly with this flood of

17. Sanders, Evolution Executive Departments, Continental Congress, 55.
correspondence, and Gerry spent many hours answering petty
and minor inquiries because there was practically no sec-
retarial help.

At the end of Gerry's first year in Congress, inflation
had become so acute that the New England states took matters
into their own hands and held a price-fixing convention at
Providence, Rhode Island.¹⁹ The delegates recommended to
Congress that prices be fixed on goods used for private or
public purposes and on wages. Violators were to be fined and
informers given 50% of the fine. States rights were maintained,
however, and Congress was asked not to use controls unless the
states passed enforcement legislation.²⁰

The principle of regulation appealed to Elbridge Gerry,
and he wrote to James Warren, the President of the Massa-
chusetts General Court:

"Trade it is true can regulate itself with a
fixed medium in time of peace, but when it appears
that a community can be but partly supplied, it must
be evident that without some regulation the mer-
chants and the traders will have unbounded power to
"demands of the wealthy what portion of their money

¹⁵. Gerry to S. Adams, Nov. 6, 1776, Gerry Papers,
PHS; same to Commissary General Joseph Trum-
bull, Oct. 3, 1776, Burnett, Letters, Con-
tinental Congress, II, 379; same to General
Horatio Gates, Dec. 4, 1776, Gerry Papers, LC.
¹⁹. For the background of the meetings (Dec. 25,
1776-Jan. 2, 1777) see John Miller, Triumph of
²⁰. Robert Treat Paine to Gerry, Jan. 16, 1777,
Gerry Papers, LC.
shall go for necessaries...."21

These sentiments, plus the fact that the Providence Convention had resolved that the states should enforce the price-fixing codes, caused Gerry to support the measure strongly. He and Sam Adams, following a well-established pattern in handling important political questions, requested instructions from the General Court which responded with a resolution of approval.22 Gerry also proposed in Congress, on his own initiative, that the economic controls under consideration be supplemented by borrowing specie at a staggering rate of 6%; by collecting taxes directly from the people (not the states); and by drawing on foreign credits to build up a reserve for the paper money already in circulation.23

Congress refused to approve wage-price controls, and even questioned the right of the New England states to hold an economic convention; Gerry's proposals were not seriously considered. Instead of launching a full investigation of wages and prices to determine the extent of the need for regulation, Congress asked the states to do the job; but after Massachusetts set up a workable code, Congress did not apply it.24

21. Feb. 11, 1777, Gerry Papers, MHS. (Italics mine.)
23. Gerry to J. Adams, Feb. 15, 1777, Gerry Papers, MHS.
Congress should not be censured for its vacillation because, even if controls had been established, poor transportation prevented the army from obtaining supplies purchased on a competitive-bid basis in distant areas.

Financial affairs limped along under the organization of February 1776 until the summer of 1778 when the Board of Treasury urged Congress to overhaul the fiscal system. A special committee consisting of Robert and Gouvernor Morris, Richard Henry Lee and Gerry made an exhaustive study of the situation and recommended the following: a loan of five million pounds sterling for a reserve to stabilize the currency; a permanent system of state taxes, payable in specie and earmarked for Congressional use; a poll tax of 50¢ per person and payable to Congress; curtailment of the states' rights to issue paper money, particularly as a means of meeting Congress' levies; a 2% duty on imports; and cession of state lands to Congress so that they could be sold to raise money to carry on the war.

The report was apparently a compromise for Gerry did not favor all of it. He opposed the import duty and the cession of state lands because he did not want Congress to

25. For the great need for reform see Gerry to J. Adams, Feb. 21, 1777; same to Warren, April 3, 1778, Gerry Papers, LC; A. S. Bolles, Financial History of the United States, Comprehending the Years, 1774-1789 (Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1904), Chap. IV.
have an income which the states could not control. This made his support of the points which called for deflation of the continental paper and the establishment of a sound-money reserve meaningless because the crippling inflation had been largely caused by Congress' lack of an independent income.27

Congress' implementation of the committee's report revealed a desire to maintain states rights. It recommended to the states that they curtail their printing presses and pay continental levies in sound money. Congress also resolved to draw bills of exchange on the American minister in Paris, Benjamin Franklin, who in turn presented them to the French treasury for payment.28 Such a procedure insured specie for special projects and facilitated borrowing from France, but not enough money was obtained to set up a reserve for the paper money in circulation. Thus the states remained the main source of Continental income. The committee's proposals for state taxes, a poll tax, cession of state lands and a 2% import duty were given scant attention by the delegates.

In addition to these relatively minor achievements, Congress revised the Treasury staff. An auditor, treasurer

27. Gerry to John Wendell, Sept. 21, 1778, Gerry Papers, MHS.
and comptroller were added to the committee on claims, and a definite line of authority was established, so the delegates could not cater to the demands for special service from the people back home. And, in order to clean up the back-log of pending claims, Congress resolved to set aside Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays to deal with financial matters. The watchdog Board of Treasury, made up of delegates to Congress, was continued, however,\textsuperscript{29} and the fancy titles given to the "technical help" did not alter the fact that the Treasury was still a bookkeeping office and not a policy making body. Gerry instigated continuation of this system because he wanted to keep Congress in direct control of the Treasury.\textsuperscript{30} These reforms did not solve or even alleviate the economic situation.

When shortages of military supplies became particularly serious after the Treasury reorganization of 1778, due to the reluctance of merchants to accept Continental paper, Gerry advanced a new theory to solve the problem. Paper money, he noted, did not have to mean inflation. Since the value, durability and quantity of goods determined price, which in turn fixed the real value of money, anything could circulate as a medium of exchange, if it truly represented

\textsuperscript{29} Bolles, Financial History of the United States, 67.

\textsuperscript{30} Gerry to Wendell, Oct. 8, 1778, Gerry Papers, LC.
the national wealth. And where was the wealth of the nation? It was in the hands of the people who Gerry believed ought to be taxed of part of their possessions so that it could be used for the general welfare. An examination of the Journals of the Continental Congress does not reveal any effort on Gerry's part to have Congress given the power to tax the people directly. Instead, he apparently proposed to Sam Adams that the states study ways and means of levying direct taxes and collecting them in specie which in turn would be paid to Congress instead of cheap and debased paper currency. There is no record of Adams' having taken any action on Gerry's theories.

Gerry's belief in states rights still dominated his thinking in 1779 when Congress began its perennial reorganization of the Treasury. During the debates in Congress, he strongly supported measures providing for levies on the states of $15,000,000 for current expenses plus $6,000,000 for a sinking fund. This move had the effect of leaving Congress fully dependent on the states for cash.

31. Gerry to J. Adams, Jan. 28, 1779, Gerry Papers, LC; same to Robert Treat Paine, May 26, 1779, Gerry Papers, MHS.
32. Feb. 6, 1779, Gerry-Adams Papers, NYPL.
33. For the details of the fiscal measures of 1779, see Bolles, Financial History of the United States, Chap. VI.
Gerry urged his fellow delegates to float loans in Spain and France, and to arrange to draw bills of exchange against the foreign credits, instead of printing more paper money. Congress, however, wanted to rely on American resources and attempted to restore the value of the Continental dollar by passing a resolution providing "...that any of the bills emitted by order of Congress prior to 1780, and no others, be received by the Treasury in payment of the state quotas". This law was designed to stop the states' printing presses and thereby give the Continental dollar an opportunity to stabilize, but the Continental was so worthless that it did not circulate freely enough to drive the state issues out of existence. Furthermore, the states could still print money to purchase supplies for Continental use, thereby injecting still more paper money into the currency system.

Inflation became so serious that Congress considered redeeming some of the paper money in circulation in order to bolster the financial system. In view of Gerry's position on the Board of Treasury and his part in the controversy over Alexander Hamilton's assumption measures under the

34. Gerry to J. Adams, July 28, 1779, Gerry Papers, LC.  
37. For a sound discussion of the background of this extreme step see Burnett, Letters, Continental Congress, IV, 789-800.
Federal Constitution, his views on redemption in 1779 are significant.

The occasion for Gerry's stating his position was the debate touched off by John Jay's discussion of the financial situation. To Jay's first proposition, as to whether and in what manner the faith of the United States had been pledged for redemption, Gerry replied that while honor dictated redemption at face value, practical economics ruled out such a step. Instead of mortgaging the future by saddling the country with a huge and practically unpayable debt of $200,000,000, an equitable arrangement would be to redeem the bills at the value at which they circulated when issued. For example, a $5.00 note which purchased one pound of gunpowder when issued in 1777, would be worth as much at redemption time as a $500 note issued in 1779, and which bought only one pound of gunpowder. Jay's second proposition, as to whether the public faith and credit could survive even partial repudiation, made a profound impression on Gerry. He declared that the public expected no more in return for its depreciated paper money than its actual value at the time it circulated. Furthermore, a partial repudiation of the debt was the only fair procedure because the people would

38. Gerry to Warren, Oct. 19, 1779, Gerry Papers, LC is a formal report to the General Court.
pay taxes to redeem the paper, and the people should not be forced to pay sound money for value not received. Despite all the talk about redemption, no positive action was taken. Instead, Congress made important changes in the organization of the Treasury. The shake-up of the previous year had brought into the open a sharp difference of opinion concerning the place and function of standing committees in the Continental system. And, as the Board of Treasury system had failed to solve the financial problem, the proponents of a strong executive committee were able to place three outsiders on the newly constituted five-man Board of Treasury. Furthermore, no delegate was to serve for more than six months by virtue of one appointment. Thus Congress really began to delegate policy-making authority to outsiders on the executive boards because a six-month term hardly gave a delegate an opportunity really to learn his job and still influence policy. Whether this change was made to oust Gerry, whose four years on the Board of Treasury had given him a commanding influence in financial affairs, is not clear. Gerry's correspondence makes no mention of such a motive for the reorganization nor does Burnett's Letters of the Members of the Continental Congress shed any light on the question.

39. Ibid.
40. Sanders, Executive Departments, Continental Congress, 72.
The financial legislation of 1779 did not improve the economic situation, and Gerry repeated in Congress the view that the only practical way of fighting inflation was to stop printing paper money and thereby allow the inflated money in circulation to stabilize in value. Then, with the money circulating at a fixed, albeit depreciated value, businessmen would be willing accept the Continental, which in turn would revive public confidence in paper money. Short of redemption this was the best possible solution because the medium of exchange in an inflated economic system can circulate only when it is trusted by the people. No action was taken on Gerry's proposal.

Not until the spring of 1780 did Congress seriously consider redemption as a means of stabilizing the currency. The situation was desperate, but the mere fact that Congress resolved to redeem an unspecified part of the $200,000,000 in circulation at a rate to be determined later caused depreciation to fall from 70-to-1 to 55-to-1, increased the amount of specie in circulation, eased circulation of Continental paper and boomed sales of government bonds. The prospect of a stabilized currency and the nation's need

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12. Gerry to J. Adams, May 6, 1780, Gerry Papers, LC.
for cash caused Robert Morris to form an association of businessmen to raise funds for Congress. Gerry joined Morris in buying heavily in Continental bonds, but the prosperity caused by Congress' promise of redemption was transitory, and Gerry for the first time became disillusioned with the Continental Congress system for its vacillating attitude.\textsuperscript{43}

Gerry's cooperation with Robert Morris in 1760 marked the end of his activities as a member of the Board of Treasury and, for two years, as a delegate to Congress. During a debate in Congress, Gerry took offense at a ruling by the President and retired to Massachusetts.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{43} Gerry invested at least 3,000 pounds in specie. See James Lovell to Gerry, Sept. 8, 1761, Gerry Papers, LC. When, in 1761, Gerry settled his accounts as a delegate to Congress, the Massachusetts General Court gave him $4,000 in specie to settle a claim of $45,000 in paper. Austin, Gerry, I, 275. If the pound was worth $5.00, Gerry's 3,000 pounds equalled $15,000 in specie or about $150,000 in paper.

For Gerry's disillusionment see his letter of Sept. 2, 1760 to James Lovell, Gerry Papers, LC.

Gerry also purchased stock in Robert Morris' Bank of North America, but most of his money went into public accounts. For the Bank see Jensen, The New Nation, 70-71; Robert East, Business Enterprise in the American Revolution Era (Columbia Press, New York, 1938), 88-89.

\textsuperscript{44} S.E. Morison, "Elbridge Gerry, Gentleman-Democrat", New England Quarterly, II (1929) 36-37.
Part III
Military Affairs

As the Board of Treasury passed on all army accounts, Gerry was in close contact with military affairs. The Northern Department (New York) was very active during 1776 and 1777 because of General John Burgoyne's invasion, and the Department's Commissary General, Joseph Trumbull, worked closely with Gerry in raising men and money.45

Gerry was a strong supporter of General Horatio Gates, the second in command of the Department. When Sam Adams influenced Congress in 1775 to appoint Gates to high command, Gerry had heartily approved the promotion. During the following year, when an American invasion of Canada was discussed in Congress, the Marblehead leader felt Gates was the best man to lead the expedition and to command the Northern Department.46 The New York delegation, however, forced Congress to keep General Philip Schuyler in overall command, although Gates was made the "top combat" general under Schuyler. Gerry's correspondence with Trumbull reveals that he tended to bypass Schuyler as much as possible and to deal with Gates directly.47 Thus the New Englander was partially responsible for keeping Gates in high command in

45. Gerry to Trumbull, July 5, 1776 and Trumbull's reply July 8 and Gerry to Trumbull March 26, 1777, Gerry Papers, LC.
46. Gerry to Gates, June 25, 1776, Gerry Papers, PHS.
northern New York thereby giving him the opportunity to obtain much of the credit for defeating Burgoyne at Saratoga in 1777.

While Gates was winning his glory, Washington's military exploits were far from glorious. Defeats at Germantown and Brandywine and the evacuation of Philadelphia were conspicuous contrasts to Gates's victories in New York. Although Gerry did not draw any odious comparisons, he did realize, as did probably few people, that with finances in such a poor state the army had to take vigorous measures if it were to survive the winter of 1777-1778. So, early in the fall of 1777, he wrote to Washington and stated that since the supply system had literally collapsed, the General ought to requisition arms and food and pay for them with military writs. Washington refused to assume such dictatorial powers which, he asserted, violated private personal and property rights.

The commander in chief was not being obstinate in refusing to take the action proposed by Gerry. A year and a half earlier, Gerry and several other delegates had severely criticized Washington's recommendation to Congress for the promotion of certain generals as an attempt to subordinate

49. Sept. 27, 1777, Austin, Gerry, I, 224-225.
civil power to military authority, and Washington probably felt that he could not afford to revive the dispute at such a critical time. Washington's military failures in addition to his apparent listlessness caused considerable concern in Congress and led to the so-called Conway Cabal. The main outlines of the Cabal are well known. General Horatio Gates, victor over Burgoyne at Saratoga, went to Congress in the fall of 1777, and a group of delegates and other military and political leaders plotted to make him commander in chief. Washington learned of the intrigue and "leaked" to Gates, who was to succeed Washington, an indiscreetly-worded letter written to Gates by General Thomas

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50. Bernhard Knollenberg, George Washington (MacMillan Co., New York, 1940), Chap. XI.
Conway, the supposed leader of the plot. The matter finally became public and the resulting publicity rallied an overwhelming support for Washington, and the cabal ended.

While the cabal was still running its course, Congress began to initiate reforms in the Board of War and Commissary Department, and sent a special committee consisting of Joseph Jones of Virginia, Robert Morris and Elbridge Gerry to Washington's camp to investigate the military situation.\(^52\)

Gerry's report of the aims and workings of this committee reveals his critical attitude toward Washington at the time. On November 29, Gerry received a letter from John Adams in which Adams stated, "Our timorous defensive policy is not calculated to win popular applause. Defeat and dissatisfaction and inactivity are fatal to our cause...."\(^53\)

Gerry's reply showed that he and Congress were upset toward the point of desperation:

"...But I see where you solicitorously enquire about the state of the army which I will endeavor to give in a few words. It is from the information I have been able to collect without yet seeing the returns, stronger than it has been in the campaign. Clothing is much wanted and the states are impressed with the need to send immediate supplies; from whence I humbly conceive there is prospect of speedy relief. In some of the officers, there seems to be an irresistible desire to enter into winter quarters

\(^{52}\) Sanders, Executive Departments, Continental Congress, 12-11; Rossman, Thomas Mifflin, 116-19.

\(^{53}\) Dated Nov. 10, 1777, Gerry Papers, LC.
but others are adverse to it, as are Congress unanimously. Mr. Morris and Mr. Jones, who are of the Committee, as far as I am able to collect their sentiments, are not disposed to come to Camp for the purpose of promoting this plan, to which I think it necessary to inform you I am altogether adverse. The Committee have wide powers and should a winter Camp be determined on, will not be reserved in exercising them so far as shall appear necessary to accomplish something decisive. If calling in a powerful reinforcement of the militia or remaining with the army until they shall by one vigorous effort nobly endeavor to subdue the enemy, will have a good effect on the minds of our friends in the army, I think the Committee will most heartily propose the measure, but I will promise nothing until after their conference which is with the General can be known.  

The letter speaks largely for itself, but several points require elucidation. First, it was obviously written before Gerry had obtained a true picture of Washington's situation; he was apparently not alone in this regard because he states that Congress was unanimous in opposing a winter camp and in supporting a new offensive. Actually, the army was barely able to exist. Second, the reference to calling out the militia probably was based on some assurance from Thomas Mifflin, whom gossip branded as a leader in the Conway Cabal, that he would help get out the militia as he had done so capably in 1776 and 1777.  

54. Gerry to J. Adams, Dec. 3, 1777, Gerry Papers, LC. None of the standard secondary accounts of the cabal has used this letter. See also, Freeman, George Washington, IV, 561-62.  
55. Rossman, Thomas Mifflin, 129.  
56. Ibid., 70-74.
What resulted from the Committee's conferences with Washington? While the politicians were urging him to open an offensive, General Sir William Howe's sortie from Philadelphia showed the delegates that an offensive was out of the question because the American army was not even able to hold its ground. Of course if the army did not fight, it had to go into winter quarters, and the area around Valley Forge was selected for the camp. The most important result of the conferences, however, was the realization on the part of the delegates that Washington had done his very best with the resources available. This was important because Robert Morris was an influential member of the Pennsylvania delegation, and Gerry was a key figure in the New England bloc which Dr. Burnett asserts wanted to remove Washington.

The problem of unrest in the officer corps was also discussed by Washington and the Committee. The commander in chief, plagued by a perennial shortage of good officers, proposed several plans to procure and hold them. The most important of these was the suggestion that officers of the Continental Line be guaranteed half-pay for life, if they

57. Gerry to J. Adams, Dec. 8, 1777, Gerry Papers, LC. Gerry was nearly captured by the British troops. See Austin, Gerry, I, 298.
58. The Continental Congress, Chap. XV. See also Gerry's Jan. 27, 1778 to Sam Adams in which Gerry absolves Washington of any blame and Freeman, George Washington, IV, 563.
served for the duration of the war or until discharged. Half-pay, Washington believed, would remove the main reason for the large number of resignations: the need to return home and enter business to provide for wives and children. 59

Gerry realized the gravity of the problem and was sympathetic to Washington's reasoning, but he opposed a policy of granting half-pay pensions for life because it resembled the British system. If any such pension were granted, however, Gerry believed that the following conditions should govern it: a time limit of seven years; a signed pledge from the officer to serve for the duration of the war unless discharged sooner for disability; an oath of allegiance to the state where the officer resided; and a disability on holding public office while drawing the pension. 60

The seven-year time limit and the disability on holding public office meant no pension lists would develop such as those from which England had selected men like Major General Thomas Gage to hold high civil office; and the oath of allegiance ruled out any possibility of a foreigner retaining legal ties with his mother country. 61

59. For Washington's entire part in the half-pay controversy see Burnett, The Continental Congress, Chaps. XIX, XXI, XXIV.
60. Gerry to James Warren, April 9, 1776, Gerry Papers, PHS, reviews the 1777 meeting with Washington.
61. Gerry to Sam Adams, May 4, 1778, Gerry-Adams Papers, NYPL.
parliamentary compromises, Congress reduced the term of payment from life to seven years, and rejected the political restrictions offered by Gerry. Such legislation was, of course, passed after the delegates had left Valley Forge. 62

Gerry's other political activities during the period of the Conway Cabal do not reveal his participation in any movement to remove Washington. True, he voted in Congress not to accept the resignation of the discredited Conway, but so did many delegates. 63 Furthermore, to the direct question from General Henry Knox as to whether or not there was a movement in Congress to oust Washington, Gerry answered that he knew of no such plan. 64 Was he telling Knox the entire truth, or was he hiding behind the technicality that there was no resolution before Congress to relieve the commander in chief? On the basis of the available evidence, Gerry must be taken at his word. His experiences at Washington's camp apparently convinced him that a change in commanders was not expedient.

For all practical purposes, Gerry's influence in the army ended when Congress completed its reorganization of the Board of War and the Commissary Department making them independent of the Board of Treasury as far as purchasing

63. Ibid., XVII, 147.
64. Feb. 27, 1778, Gerry Papers, LC.
was concerned. No longer did men like Gerry have to spend so much time in straightening out petty military matters; and no longer did the civil authorities dabble so extensively in the internal workings of the army.

Part IV
Foreign Affairs

Foreign affairs played an important part in the American Revolution from its very beginnings. The French, smarting from their defeat at the hands of the British in 1763, waited for the Revolution to begin; in fact they had come to believe as early as 1770 that such an explosion was inevitable. Thus the Battle of Lexington played into the hands of the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Count de Vergennes, who sent a special envoy to America to encourage the revolutionary leaders and to assure the colonists that France had no designs on Canada. Vergennes used the emissary's optimistic report to convince King Louis XVI that France had to give material aid to the colonists if they were to succeed in humbling England, and the dummy firm of Roderique Hortalez was organized to cover shipment of arms and supplies from

65. Sanders, Executive Departments, Continental Congress, 13, 15-16.
the French government to America. This assistance, which in the final analysis made victory possible, was not moti-
vated by any lofty regard for the principles of freedom à la américaine; Vergennes was willing to ally with anyone who would fight Britain. 67

Gerry was consulted by Sam Adams regarding assistance from France, and he set forth several conditions to govern a connection with the French. The Marblehead leader was certain that France would send arms and ammunition if the United States did not expect territorial cessions or diplomatic support in European capitals. Conversely, Gerry believed that the United States should not promise to cede territory, guarantee French possessions or sign a permanent political agree-
ment as conditions of French aid. The ideal situation, he felt would be to have France throw open her trade channels to American shippers and let them earn the money needed to win the war. 68

Gerry expressed these views when he participated in the debates of 1776 on the so-called Plan of Treaties. The Plan was ostensibly to be the basis for treaties with any

67. Bemis, Diplomacy of the American Revolution, 23;
Claude H. Van Tyne, "Influences which Determined the French Government to make the Treaty with America, 1776", American Historical Review, XII (1906), 529-545.
68. Gerry to S. Adams, Feb. 8, 1776, Gerry Papers, NYPL.
power wishing to ally with the United States, but actually it was the basis for the French Alliance. In addition to the views already given, Gerry approved including in a French treaty the principle that "free ships make free goods" because he believed that it was the only way in which a neutral could trade in the troubled 18th century. The Marblehead merchant also approved the clauses providing for mutual military aid since they had no political or economic strings. On the other hand, there were several points of which Gerry disapproved. These included the provisions for a perpetual treaty of friendship; full reciprocity of trade without a guarantee that France would maintain a fair balance of trade; and the request for a French guarantee of American possession of British territory captured during the Revolution.

Gerry was not pleased with the Alliance after it was completed. While feeling that it practically guaranteed independence, he believed that the clauses regulating trade

70. "Free ships make free goods meant a "free" or neutral ship protected a cargo from confiscation by a belligerent unless the cargo contained contraband. Thus, after the Revolution, the United States, as a neutral, could carry on a lucrative trade with the perennially brawling European powers. England never recognized the principle and this nearly brought war with the United States in 1793.
71. Gerry to James Warren, Oct. 8, Dec. 29, 1776, Gerry Papers, LC. See also Edward Corwin, French Policy and the American Alliance of 1778 (Princeton, 1916), Chaps. VI-IX.
between the United States and France permitted the latter to dominate American trade channels, thereby preventing New England merchants from freely carrying on the commerce needed by the United States to obtain the money to carry on the war. Of particular concern in this regard was the lack of a provision guaranteeing the United States free access to the lucrative West Indies carrying trade. The other major point which troubled Gerry was the lack of a time limit on the treaties. He remarked that a treaty should be made for a specific purpose and for a limited length of time. People and situations changed continuously and what was sound one day might be unfavorable the next. To support his point, Gerry noted that European powers were constantly changing their friendships, and the United States might find herself tied to France at a time when she could more profitably remain neutral. Fortunately, Gerry did not live in seventeenth century Salem or he might have been adjudged a witch for making such an accurate forecast of the problems America encountered as a neutral during the wars between France and England from 1793 to 1815.


73. Gerry to Wendell, June 3, 1778, Gerry Papers, LD.
Gerry had little further contact with foreign affairs until 1779, when the French asked for a complete statement of American conditions for peace with England. France was negotiating an alliance with Spain who was asking for a guarantee that neither signatory would make a separate peace. Such an agreement meant relative unanimity of agreement on war aims, and since the French alliance with the United States had a similar provision, France had to be certain that American war aims did not conflict with those of Spain.\textsuperscript{74}

Gerry was a member of the committee appointed by Congress to draft the American terms.\textsuperscript{75} He made independence the \textit{sine qua non} of any negotiations, and no one argued with him on that point. He was in a minority, however, when he opposed the Mississippi River as the western boundary and argued that the West was a sinkhole which would drain away the East's population and wealth and thereby ruin the national economy.\textsuperscript{76} The final item in the committee's report, providing for a guarantee of full and free rights to fish off Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, touched off a long and

\textsuperscript{74}. Bemis, \textit{Diplomacy of the American Revolution}, 177-178.
\textsuperscript{75}. Ibid., 162-163.
\textsuperscript{76}. Gerry to Warren, May 8, 1779, Gerry Papers, LC. See also J.J. Meng (ed.), \textit{Despatches and Instructions of Conrad Alexandre Gerard, 1778-1780} (Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1939), 214, for Gerry's attitude toward the West as reported by the French Minister, Count Gerard.
and bitter debate. Gerry had sound reasons for leading the fight to make acquisition of the fisheries a fundamental part of the peace treaty. Marblehead and nearly all the New England coastal towns based their economies on fishing: the fishing fleets employed thousands of men and formed the basis for large fortunes, including that of the Gerry family.

The debate in Congress revolved around five propositions put forth by Gerry: (1) the welfare of the United States required that the people "continue to enjoy their right to fish in ocean waters"; (2) France ought to support that right during peace negotiations with Britain; (3) no peace treaty with England unless the fishing rights were granted; (4) Congress should not approve a treaty without a guarantee of the fishing rights unless all of the state legislatures approved; (5) both England and France had to recognize American claims to fish anywhere in the open sea.

Congress speedily approved the first two propositions, but the third, which was really an ultimatum, caused endless debate. Gerry was eloquent in its defense.

The issue, he said, was not so much a matter of fishing

77. Burnett, The Continental Congress, 433, calls it the most hotly fought parliamentary battle ever waged in Congress.
as one of enterprise, industry and employment. For fishing
was the employment of those who were otherwise idle, the
food of those who were otherwise hungry, and the wealth of
those who were otherwise poor. For these reasons acquisi-
tion of the cod banks was a fundamental point to incorporate
into the instructions of the minister to England. Gerry
denied such a policy would prolong the war. He declared
that whenever Britain was ready to recognize American inde-
pendence, she would accede to all reasonable and fair de-
mands. A firm stand was all that was required to convince
England that America was determined to stand up for her
rights.

As for those rights, Gerry went on to say, the God of
nature included Americans when he gave the sea to mankind.
All that they wanted was the right to cast hooks into the
seas and own what they caught. Any peace treaty which did
not guarantee that privilege was a rejection of natural
rights and of the basic aims of the Revolution. The Marble-
head merchant felt so strongly on this point that he was
willing to make a peace treaty without consulting France.

A significant part of Gerry's argument was his prediction
of America's post-war trade. He argued that if France
actively opposed the United States' endeavor to obtain
access to the fishing banks, the commerce of New England
would be with Britain instead of with the ally of 1778.
If, however, France supported America's claim, then England would have to trade on New England's terms or face the loss of her former colonies' patronage. In either case, the profits from the fisheries were absolute necessities in any post-war trade, if an equitable balance were to be maintained.  

Approximately thirty votes were taken on Gerry's propositions and the various amendments proposed to them. The final result was a compromise, but one which was a victory for New England. Instead of making the fisheries an absolute sine qua non of peace, Congress resolved that the armed might of the United States be exerted after the war, if Britain prevented Americans from using the fishing banks.

After drawing up its peace terms, Congress considered the selection of a minister to negotiate the treaty. The bitter debate over the fisheries aroused strong opposition to Gerry's nomination of John Adams, but the Marblehead politician was able to compromise with his opponents and Adams received the coveted appointment.

Gerry's support of John Adams and of strongly phrased instructions was significant, because by this action he showed that he favored a firm, but fair foreign policy.

80. Austin, Gerry, I, 289-293.
vis-à-vis England. This view, which Gerry always maintained, became important during the Federalist administrations, and probably had a strong bearing on Adams's decision in 1797 to appoint Gerry to the XYZ mission to France.

Gerry's prediction during the fishery debates that England would compete with France for American trade after the Revolution, did not, of course, come true. Although England did not refuse to trade with her former colonies, the United States could not prevent the British from selling more than they purchased, and the unfavorable trade balance drained away American reserves of cash. In an attempt to develop an equitable balance, John Adams, the American minister to London, opened negotiations for a commercial treaty, but British mercantilism ruled out any possibility of readmitting the United States to her former favored place in the imperial system. Adams was alarmed at the British attitude, and solicited Gerry's views. The Marblehead merchant replied that he had no confidence in any political attempt to regulate economic matters unless the two countries had a formal treaty based on mutual confidence and trust. Such a pact was impossible at the time because England was showing herself incapable of such friendliness so soon.

after the Revolution. What could America do by herself to solve her commercial problems? Gerry had no solution to offer Adams except to hope that free trade would bring enough cash to the United States so that she could absorb the English goods and still have enough to develop new trade channels.84

France was aloof to American attempts to negotiate a commercial treaty, or at least receive preferential treatment. True, there was a more favorable balance of trade between the United States and France then there was between the United States and England because of French demand for Southern tobacco,85 but the French refused to admit Americans to the lucrative West Indies carrying trade or to their own domestic grain trade.86

Thus Gerry had first-hand contact with both France and England at a time when either power could have greatly assisted the United States by making—for them—relatively minor economic concessions. As a result of their refusal to cooperate, Gerry became cool to both of them, and cannot be

84. Nov. 6, 1785, Gerry Papers, LC. For the British attitude see Henry C. Bell, "British Commercial Policy in the West Indies, 1763-1792", English Historical Review, XXXI, 429-441.
classified as an Anglophile or Francophile, a point which had great significance during the Federalist period.
Chapter III
The Federal Constitution

An important part of Elbridge Gerry's work during his last two years in the Continental Congress, 1783-1785, consisted of an attempt to retain, unamended, the Articles of Confederation. The most pressing reasons for amendments were for Congress to be able to regulate foreign and interstate commerce and to have an income without having to requisition funds from the states. The sad condition of commercial affairs was probably the most serious problem facing the United States after the Revolution.¹ For Gerry, the situation was particularly significant because Marblehead, along with most New England coastal towns, was literally swamped with British goods whose importation the Continental Congress could not adequately regulate under the Articles of Confederation.

At first, Gerry strongly opposed any broad revision of the Articles to give Congress workable powers to control foreign trade. The states and the people of influence, he believed, could work out a reasonable solution without any interference from the central government.²

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² Gerry to S. Adams, March 3, 1784, Gerry-Adams Papers, NYPL.
Gerry maintained this view for more than a year after peace was made with England, and, in 1785, was responsible for Massachusetts passing a law which placed heavy import duties on British goods and a prohibition on the export of American goods in British vessels. This drastic act did not improve the situation, and there was strong agitation by the merchants for a nation-wide commercial convention to discuss ways and means of regulating trade. Gerry was cool to this movement. "I am sorry," he wrote to Rufus King, "the states have not adopted means to regulate trade themselves...If the people and the legislatures have not sense sufficient to rectify the commercial Evils, they will rectify themselves."4

The Massachusetts General Court did not allow laissez faire to run rampant, and, in August 1785, it passed a resolution which asked Congress to call a commercial convention to discuss temporary delegations of power to Congress. Governor James Bowdoin forwarded the proposal to the Massachusetts delegation in Philadelphia who took the bold and almost unprecedented step of refusing to present

3. Gerry to J. Adams, March 11, 1785, Gerry Papers, LC.
4. May 19, 1785, Burnett, Letters, Continental Congress, VIII, 121. (Italics in text.)
it to Congress! Although the entire delegation signed the letter which gave the reasons for this action, Gerry was no doubt the brains behind the move.5

Massachusetts, the delegates wrote to Bowdoin, was deeply interested in commercial affairs, and therefore had a large stake in any movement to revise the Articles of Confederation. The poor state of foreign trade did not, however, warrant a large increase in the powers of Congress. Before any action was taken to revise the Articles, Congress ought to negotiate trade treaties, and give them fifteen years to function.6 Such a cooling-off period was needed because the problem was so large and so poorly defined that amendment of the Articles would have to be made in broad and general terms which might open the door to oppression of the states by the national government. The delegates also painted a gloomy picture of the possible by-products of broad revision. The oppressions of England's strong national government had caused the Revolution, and the states had to prevent such a monster from rising over them again. Furthermore,

5. Massachusetts delegates to Bowdoin, Sept. 3, 1785, Burnett, Letters, Continental Congress, VII, 206-209. (This letter is in Gerry's style and has his peculiar punctuation. Rufus King and Charles Holten, the other delegates, were young and relatively inexperienced men who, at this time at least, were under Gerry's influence.)
6. There is no reason given for the 15-year time limit.
the process of revising the Articles would probably stir up passions and strife which might seriously injure the existing political system. Moreover, if the state legislature insisted on a convention, was such a move legal? The Articles provided for a Congressional approval as well as the approval of the states before they could be amended, and the Massachusetts legislature would have to work through Congress and not call a special meeting on its own authority. The letter closed with the query as to whether there was to be a demand for amendments every time a problem arose which was not specifically covered in the existing constitution.

George Bancroft has criticized Gerry for blocking a thorough revision of the Articles, and thereby delaying the formation of a strong constitution. Such criticism is unwarranted because the delegates pointed out in their letter to the Governor that Congress was very busy, and could not consider Massachusetts' proposals for at least several weeks. This gave the Governor ample opportunity and time to consult with the legislature and possibly overrule the delegates, but the legislature upheld Gerry's plea for abandonment of any plan to revise the Articles.

8. Gerry to Bowdoin, Nov. 16, 1785, Gerry Papers, LC.
Gerry was not a member of Congress when the next attempt to amend the Articles, the Annapolis Convention, was made. The meeting was called by the Virginia House of Burgesses, in a resolution dated January 21, 1786, "...to consider and recommend a federal plan for regulating commerce...." There was a pressing need for such an undertaking, and even Arthur Lee, long a proponent of states rights, urged Gerry to have the Massachusetts legislature support the convention. Lee did not want to rewrite the Articles; all he wanted was a temporary increase in the power of Congress so that it could levy an import duty to pay the national debt. "Such an increase of power may be a dangerous precedent", wrote Lee, "but anarchy is more so." Lee's influence and the poor state of national finances caused Gerry to relax his opposition to amending the Articles. He was willing to attend the forthcoming convention, but only to discuss temporary grants of power to regulate trade through an import duty. He did not want Congress to regulate all phases of foreign and interstate commerce. The Massachusetts legislature decreed otherwise. It instructed

9. Article V of the Articles prohibited a delegate from serving more than 3 years in a 6 year period. Commager, Documents of American History, 112.


11. June 16, 1786, Gerry Papers, LC.

12. Gerry to S. Adams, August 12, 1786, Gerry-Adams Papers, NYPL.
Lieutenant-Governor Thomas Cushing, Francis Dana, Stephen Higginson and Gerry to attend the convention for the purpose of studying foreign trade and establishing a broad system of regulation. These instructions were diametrically opposed to Gerry's views and caused him to decline the appointment. Apparently the rest of the delegation-elect agreed with Gerry, for Massachusetts was not represented at Annapolis. Soon after the failure of the Annapolis Convention, Shay's Rebellion broke out in Massachusetts. The revolt of the farmer-debtor class against conservative-property interests had a profound influence on Gerry's thinking. He and his wife and their small children were living in Cambridge, at that time a relatively isolated community which was in the path of the rebel army. Throughout much of the fall of 1786 the family waited for the torrent to engulf them, but by Christmas the terror was past and Gerry wrote to Rufus King: "The rebels are not coming here and my babes are safe. I shall soon see Governor Bowdoin and we shall see who is going to run this state." Gerry was in this frame of mind when he went to the Federal Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia.

13. Austin, Gerry, II, 5; Madison's Debates, xlvii.
15. Dec. 25, 1786, Gerry Papers, LC.
After drawing up its rules of order, the Convention turned to consideration of a 15-point program proposed by Edmund Randolph of Virginia. Randolph's plan, which became the basis for the Constitution, was a literal bombshell for the conservative delegates, for it proposed scrapping the Articles of Confederation and replacing them with a strong central government. Such drastic action alarmed Gerry who strongly warned the members that it violated states rights and the compact theory of government. In support of his statement, Gerry quoted the part of his credentials which specifically provided for revision of the existing constitution. Gerry was voted down.

After deciding to discard the Articles, the convention considered the form of the new government. The legislative branch was debated first. Gerry feared a democratic legislature. According to Madison, he believed that the then existing national crisis was caused by an excess of democracy. The people did not lack virtue but were the dupes of pretended patriots. He had no objection, however, to election of the legislature by a popular vote so modified that men of honor and character were elected. Gerry felt that the best way

16. Madison's Debates, 23-26, 28. (Madison's reports are summaries or paraphrases of the speaker's remarks and are not quoted here because they are not the direct quotes of the speaker.)
to carry out such a procedure was to have the people nominate candidates and have the state legislatures make the final choice. As the debates progressed, it became obvious that the lower house was going to be directly elected by the people, and Gerry warned that men of indulgence, ignorance and baseness would spare no pains to win their way against men who were superior. He also modified his original views on having the legislatures select members of the national congress and asserted that such a system was no guarantee against an excess of democracy because the state legislatures were elected by a broad democratic suffrage. Gerry held this distrust of the people throughout the convention, although the rest of the Massachusetts delegation opposed him.

Gerry was more successful in having his anti-democratic views accepted when the upper house came into consideration. He set forth and considered four possible methods of election: by the lower house—which he opposed because it was too democratic; appointment by the chief executive—rejected as being too monarchical; by direct vote—which he found unacceptable because election of both houses by the people left no protection for people of wealth and property who

18. Ibid., 73; Gerry to S. Adams, Dec. 3, 1786, Gerry Papers, LC.
were in a numerical minority; or by the state legislatures—which Gerry felt was the best method because the legislatures were more likely to preserve property rights.\textsuperscript{19}

Gerry was chairman of the committee which reported the Great Compromise plan on the make-up of the national legislature. The report provided for one member of the lower house per 40,000 people; origination of money bills in the lower house; and equal vote for each state in the upper house.\textsuperscript{20} Although Gerry read the report, he made the point perfectly clear that he did not favor placing such broad powers in the hands of the popularly elected lower house. Still, if the lower house had to have such authority, then wealth as well as mere numbers ought to be considered in setting up the districts. Otherwise the upper house and the chief executive were at the mercy of the democracy.\textsuperscript{21} Gerry altered somewhat his demand that wealth determine representation, however, when the final vote was taken on the proposal to count five slaves as three whites for representation and taxation purposes. He opposed the three-fifths compromise as immoral, and ignored the fact that the slave was considered as property by law and that earlier in the convention he had argued for wealth as a basis of representation.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Madison's Debates, 71-73.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} \textit{Ibid.}, 42.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} \textit{Ibid.}, 211, 214, 218.
\end{itemize}
Gerry also set forth conflicting views on the position of the chief executive. He opposed election by the national legislature because it placed the executive under an obligation to a democratically chosen body. In place of such a poor method, Gerry proposed nomination and election by the state legislatures. At least, the state legislatures should nominate, while electors, chosen by a restricted suffrage, made the final selection.\(22\) Gerry did not want the chief executive to function without the sound advice of a permanent advisory council, particularly in exercising the veto. Alexander Hamilton clashed with Gerry on this point by insisting on an unrestricted veto, whereupon Gerry reversed himself and argued against any veto at all because the legislature consisted of the best men of the community who would pass only sound laws.\(23\) A special committee including Gerry was then appointed to draft a plan for choosing the president. Apparently nothing was done by this group; at least it made no formal report, but Gerry seized upon the opportunity to suggest a novel method of election. He proposed that the governors of the states cast votes for president in the same proportion as the state was represented in Congress. The

\(22\) Madison's Debates, 114.
\(23\) Ibid., 51, 52.
idea received scant attention and was speedily voted down; even the majority of the Massachusetts delegation voted nay.\footnote{Madison's Debates, 80-81.}^

During the final debates on the term of office and manner of electing the president, Gerry repeated his non-democratic views. He wanted a 15-year term so the chief executive could remain aloof to political strife and not be dependent on anyone for his position. In keeping with this mistrust of the people, Gerry said that any popular election was radically vicious. The ignorance of the people would permit evil men to dominate the easily swayed popular will. The Order of the Cincinnati, for instance, was a small and powerful minority capable of controlling the people for its own ends.\footnote{Ibid., 312, 313, 323. (George Washington, the President of the Convention, was also head of the Cincinnati.)}

After these extremely conservative views were rejected by the convention, Gerry did not participate in the final drafting of the clauses providing for the election of the chief executive.

The delegate from Massachusetts made few statements of political principles during the convention. One came when the relation of the states to the national government...
was under consideration and James Madison was pressing for absolute Congressional supremacy over all state laws. Gerry strongly attacked the "supreme law of the land" idea, asserting that it was a dangerous threat to state sovereignty. If the Revolution had not been fought to protect states rights, then why had it taken place—to replace British tyranny with a domestic variety? Was any weakening of the state-rights system of government necessary or even legal? No, because the constitutional convention had met to consider ways and means of regulating trade which the states could not control, and not for the purpose of meddling in the functioning of the state governments.

Gerry feared the potential political strength of the West and proposed that the representation in Congress of newly-admitted Western states should never exceed that of the thirteen original states. He feared the West would use its power to oppress trade and commerce, and drain the national wealth into the wilderness. Furthermore, many foreigners were emigrating to the West and would soon hold important offices which might be used to injure the interests.

26. Irving Brant, James Madison, Father of the Constitution, 1787-1801 (Bobbs Merrill Co., Indianapolis, 1950), 102. (This is volume three of Brant's biography of Madison and is hereafter cited as Brant, Madison, III.)

27. Madison's Debates, 76.
of the native born. By these statements, Gerry revealed his strong desire to protect New England mercantilism and political influence in national affairs, and also reflected narrow nativism of New England.

Gerry firmly believed government had a duty to protect private property. His most important remarks on the subject were made regarding public securities held by individuals. Charles A. Beard and Irving Brant, two eminent writers on this subject, assert that Gerry's financial interests caused him to compromise his ultra-conservative views on the constitution during the early stages of the convention in the hope that he would receive guarantees for his holdings in public paper. Beard points out that Gerry told the convention during the debate on securities that he had no real interest in the question because he had only enough securities to collect enough dividends to pay his taxes. Gerry, however, drew nearly $3500 per year in interest, which more than covered his taxes. This implies that Gerry was not being entirely honest or candid while pressing for payment.

28. Madison's Debates, 251-252; Gerry to J. Adams, Feb. 18, 1788, Gerry Papers, LC.
29. C. A. Beard, An Economic Interpretation of the United States (Macmillan Co., 1913), 98 makes much of Gerry's holdings in Western lands as an influence on his political philosophy, but this seems to be refuted by the views given here.
30. Beard, An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States, 96-97; Brant, Madison, III, 143.
of the securities. There are two weaknesses in this theory. First, Gerry did not favor redemption at face value. He believed that since the public had received the real or circulating value of the securities, it ought to pay that value to someone. Second, Gerry's proposal for partial redemption was made during a general discussion of powers of Congress; Madison, for instance, was proposing the establishment of a national university and the encouragement of the arts as legitimate duties of Congress. Thus Gerry's almost casual remarks should not be interpreted as a strong desire for redemption at face value. Toward the end of the convention, however, Gerry made a stronger attempt to insure redemption at face value. He argued that since the states were being forbidden to impair the obligations of contracts, a similar prohibition should be placed on Congress. Since public securities were contracts, Congress would have to redeem at face value. If Gerry was making a last desperate attempt to safeguard his securities and had done some "log rolling" earlier in the convention, then the unanswerable question arises: why did no one second his motion?

There was an important inconsistency in Gerry's position

33. On this point see Brant, Madison, III, 143-44.
on public securities. He went on record as approving redemption, but he steadfastly opposed giving Congress power to levy taxes to obtain the funds to pay off the securities.\textsuperscript{34}

Gerry was very consistent, however, in supporting a series of clauses which would have written guarantees of personal rights into the Constitution. He argued that freedoms of speech, press and religion were legitimate points to include in the Constitution, but the convention voted him down.\textsuperscript{35} Gerry's motive for pressing for a bill of rights was probably not a democratic one. For as the convention drew to a close, and Gerry's conservative views were rarely accepted, the Massachusetts delegate continually demanded an opportunity to rewrite or expand many clauses already completed. His appeal for a bill of rights was probably made for the purpose of prolonging the debates and perhaps revising much of the work already done.

From what has been written of Gerry's activities at the convention, his refusal to sign the completed constitution should come as no surprise. His reasons for not signing were, however, rather significant. He objected to the eligibility and term of Senators, the power of the House to

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{34} Grant, Madison, III, 141.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Madison's Debates, 547.
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keep a secret journal, the inadequacy of Massachusetts' representation in Congress, the counting of "blacks" in determining representation, and the broad scope of the commerce clause. These petty and almost piddling criticisms add little to Gerry's stature as a political leader, even though they probably were only hastily assembled ideas set forth to give basis for not signing the Constitution.

Alexander Hamilton was upset by Gerry's action. The New Yorker expressed the fear that even a few characters of consequence by opposing or even refusing to sign the Constitution could do infinite mischief by arousing the latent sparks which lurked under the enthusiasm for the Constitution. Gerry was unconvinced. He asserted that the struggle between democracy and property was ready to develop into a civil war unless the proposed Constitution was rewritten, but he did not advance any principles to govern such revision. Thus as had happened throughout most of the convention, Gerry was unable to formulate any constructive policy of opposition. This was probably because the bar of secrecy on the convention's proceedings prevented him from drawing on the political sagacity of Samuel Adams and James Warren.

36. Madison's Debates, 576. (Madison uses "blacks".)
37. Ibid., 581-582.
38. Ibid., 582.
Gerry's official report of the convention to the Massachusetts legislature was restrained. His principal objections to the Constitution were that there was no adequate provision for representation of the people; that the people had no guarantee of their rights to vote; that Congress had vaguely defined powers which might become oppressive to the states; that the Presidency was too powerful and that there was no bill of rights. Furthermore, the form of the new government was national instead of federal which was a direct violation of states rights. 39

Was the writer of this letter the same man who spoke so strongly against liberty and democracy during the convention? It certainly was, and the reason for the doubletalk was an attempt to arouse the masses against the proposed Constitution. Gerry had not changed his position upon returning to Boston for he wrote to Sam Adams, "...my opinion in respect to the proposed constitution is that if adopted it will lay the foundation of an oppressive government of force and fraud, that we will bleed with taxes and sacrifice our rights for the 'people'...."40 There is little doubt that Gerry was interested in preserving the rights of the middle class

40. Oct. 18, 1787, Gerry Papers, LC.
over the rights of the people.

When Gerry opened an active campaign to defeat the Constitution, by publishing a widely-circulated pamphlet, he still did not reveal his real views. The article was directed at the common people and was based on the hope that the voters of Massachusetts would remember their rejection of the state constitution in 1778 and defeat the proposed Federal Constitution because it too lacked a bill of rights. To achieve this end, the pamphlet emphasized the Constitution's lack of guarantees of trial by jury, of freedom of the press, of freedom from oppression by a standing army, and of the right of frequent elections. In view of Gerry's utterances during the convention, the tract's demand for popular elections was sheer hypocrisy. The same condemnation must be given to the demand for shorter terms for Senators because the six-year term tended to promote an hereditary caste. At Philadelphia, Gerry had supported the

41. E. Gerry, "Observations on the New Constitution" in Paul Ford (ed.), Pamphlets on the Constitution of the United States Published during the Discussion by the People (Brooklyn, 1868), 1-24. See also Charles Warren, Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings, LX (1931), 214-216 which rather conclusively shows that most of the pamphlet was written by James Warren's wife, Mercy. It circulated, however, under Gerry's name.

42. Gerry was safe in this deception since Madison's notes, the only complete record of the Convention, were not published for nearly 40 years.
Senate as a bulwark protecting conservative property rights. Probably the most difficult point for this writer to meet was the demand for a popular vote on ratification instead of a convention because the people were the source of all power. Elbridge Gerry served his country for nearly 40 years, but at no time did he lend his name, prestige and talents to a more inconsistent and unwise program than when he refused to publicize his real reasons for not signing the Constitution.

Before the Massachusetts ratifying convention met, the war of words was intensified by Oliver Ellsworth who wrote a pamphlet which charged Gerry with favoring every anti-state-rights plan at the convention in the hope that the leading members of the meeting would approve redemption at near face value of the types of public securities held by Gerry.\textsuperscript{43} Gerry denied such motives, and the facts seem to exonerate him of duplicity,\textsuperscript{44} but Ellsworth's charges could not be fully refuted at the time that they were published because Gerry could not afford to publicize his views at Philadelphia after having published different views in his pamphlet. In this instance, Gerry was cutting his own political throat.


\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., III, 240.
Sam Adams, long Gerry's political mentor, gave him some support before the ratifying convention met. Adams believed that the Federal judiciary was undemocratic, incapable of sensing the public will, and beyond popular control. Furthermore, since the proponents of the new Constitution were arguing that economic considerations demanded replacement of the Articles, Adams noted that the states had handled the problem before and could do so again. In no case, however, was a national government needed, because the present federal system could solve any problem and still leave unhampered the rights of the states. When the ratifying convention met, however, Adams was strangely silent and did not support Gerry. 45

There is an interesting speculation as to Adams's lassitude. Gerry, Warren and Adams had been a smoothly working political team during the Revolution, with the former speaking in Congress while the latter two men handled state politics. Now, with Mercy Warren drafting the key anti-constitutionalist pamphlet in Massachusetts, there is

some reason to believe that the old triumvirate would work against the Constitution. That Adams did not cooperate is significant in any interpretation of Gerry's public career. While the point is speculative and without documentary support, Adams might have warned Gerry that he was committing political suicide by not rallying to the conservatives (the future Federalists) or joining the farmer-debtor party (the future Republicans). Practical politics was second nature to Adams, and he may have realized that unless Gerry relinquished his arch-conservative views, that he was finished politically. When Gerry did not heed Adams's advice, the Father of the Revolution might have sat back deliberately at the ratifying convention and allowed Gerry to ruin himself.

Gerry's position prior to the Massachusetts convention influenced his entire later career. By trying to rally popular opposition to the Constitution, he placed himself outside the group of able, energetic conservatives who had written the Constitution and who were to dominate the new government. By education, wealth and social position, Gerry should have become a Federalist; or if he did not want to tie up with the Hamiltonians, he should have joined Jefferson's party. Instead of fighting for principles within the framework of a well-organized party, he entered into
the wasteland of independence.

Gerry's opposition to the Constitution was seriously weakened when he failed to be elected to the state ratifying convention. The reasons for this failure are not too clear. He had just established legal residence in Cambridge, and may have failed to qualify as a candidate on technical grounds. Or, as seems more likely, the leaders in the new district may have refused to nominate him.46 Regardless of the reason, Gerry's removal from Marblehead, practically a pocket borough as far as he was concerned, was a serious political blunder.

Although not elected to the convention, Gerry was asked to accept a seat as an adviser to answer questions of fact.47 He sat through several sessions, unable to speak unless asked, until he could no longer contain himself. Soon he was answering each question with a long defensive explanation of what he had said and done at Philadelphia. Francis Dana, Gerry's friend and his fellow delegate at the Continental Congress and the Federal Constitutional Convention, protested this procedure to the Speaker, Thomas Cushing.

46. Austin, Gerry, II, 69.
who ruled that all questions put to Mr. Gerry would have to be reduced to writing and presented after the day's session ended. After such humiliating treatment by two of his friends, Gerry had to leave the convention.

The only practical effect of his attendance was indirect. One of the strongest arguments of the anti-constitutionalists had been a demand for a bill of rights guaranteeing basic personal liberties. So close was the division of opinion in the convention that the constitutionalists had to agree to the demand for amendments. Of course, most of the other states proposed similar amendments when they ratified the Constitution, so Gerry's public stand on a bill of rights was not too unusual.

Gerry's departure from the ratifying convention was extremely significant. The three hundred and sixty delegates, elected on roughly the same basis as representatives to the state legislature, were nearly equally divided on the question of ratification. The anti-constitutionalists, however, lacked a prominent leader; the basic writer on the convention speaks of their leader as "one Hawkes".

Gerry, Sam Adams, or James Warren, this group came within nineteen votes of defeating the Constitution (186-167). Why speculate on the might-have-beens if Gerry had been a delegate and had led the opposition.

Gerry's almost unbelievable ineptitude during the period of the drafting and ratification of the Federal Constitution stemmed from several factors. First, his enforced retirement from Congress in 1785 left him out of touch with the powerful conservative reaction which set in after the Revolution. This is the most reasonable explanation of why a man with his anti-democratic views opposed the conservative clauses of the Constitution; he obviously did not understand their background or appreciate their significance. Second, the Marblehead merchant had to stand alone for the first time in his public career while he was at Philadelphia. The rules of the convention forbade any member to discuss the proceedings with persons who were not delegates. Thus Gerry was unable to consult with Adams and Warren, two of the most astute politicians in American history. As a result, he blundered and alienated nearly everyone with his extreme conservatism. And he committed this political suicide as an individual, not as a delegate from Massachusetts. In the final analysis the political order had changed so that Elbridge Gerry had to stop being a spokesman for the state legislature and start being a leader in his own right.
The politics of the Federal Constitution revealed his failure to make that all-important transition.
Chapter IV
The Federal Congress, 1789-1793

For Elbridge Gerry the controversy over the ratification of the Federal Constitution carried over into the elections for the new Congress. One party, the Tory, had been eliminated from the American political scene by the Revolution, but the triumphant Whig party soon split into two misnamed factions—Federalist and anti-Federalist—over the question of whether the new Constitution should be adopted. Gerry was called an anti-Federalist because he opposed the Constitution, but he was really a federalist because he favored a federal union of states instead of a strong national government.¹

Despite his political views and the high-handed treatment meted out to him at the Massachusetts ratifying convention, Gerry sought office in the new government. He canvassed the General Court regarding a seat in the Senate, but the Warren-Adams faction was unable to help, and he had to seek election to the House.² The odds were against Gerry in this venture. He had no family or economic connections

¹ For a penetrating analysis of the forces at work in 1789 see Charles A. Beard, Economic Origins of Jeffersonian Democracy (MacMillan Co., New York, 1915), Chap. I.
² Austin, Gerry, II, 88-89. Both Adams and Warren had to run for seats in the House of Representatives and both were defeated.
and scant political influence in Middlesex County where he had recently taken up residence. As has been noted, the local leaders had refused to send him as a delegate to the state convention which ratified the Constitution, and Gerry's activities there as an unofficial adviser hardly warranted a change in their attitude toward him. The result was the appearance of several candidates in the race for Congress, and a division of votes on the first balloting so that no single candidate received a majority. Since the state election law required the winner to receive a majority,3 Gerry had not yet won a seat in Congress.

The opposition had been so strong and the newspaper attacks so personal and virulent that Gerry despaired of winning the runoff4, and seriously considered leaving public life and going to New York or Boston and entering private business.5 For reasons which are not clear, he changed his mind about retiring and was a candidate in the second balloting.

Just before the voting, the candidate published a pamphlet entitled "An Appeal to the Voters" which helped

4. Austin, Gerry, II, 91.
5. Gerry to James Warren, Nov. 28, 1786, Gerry Papers, LC.
to swing the election in his favor. 6 Gerry began the tract with the usual disclaimer of any desire to hold office, and in this instance, there was more truth in the statement than was normal for the times. The candidate's record on the Constitution was the main issue of the campaign, and he presented his views with much vigor. Gerry claimed that he had every right to oppose the Constitution until it was thoroughly revised so as to safeguard the rights of the states and the people. And he noted that every state which so far had ratified the Constitution had proposed amendments along those lines. Then came the key point of the article: "Some have endeavored", Gerry wrote, "to represent me as an enemy of the Constitution; nothing is further from the truth....I am clearly of the opinion that every citizen of every ratifying state is in duty bound to support it, and that opposition to a due administration of it would be not only unjustifiable but highly criminal...."7

Although the "Appeal" is a clear-cut statement of political principles, the possibility of a behind-the-scenes deal not to oppose unduly the new government in return for election to Federal office should not be

6. Austin, Gerry, II, 91-94 gives the text.
7. Ibid., 92-93.
ignored.\textsuperscript{8} Gerry's record as a Congressman shows that he apparently had not altered, at the time he published his pamphlet, the position which he had assumed in the Constitution and Massachusetts ratifying conventions.

After being elected, Gerry had several reasons for not accepting. His family was growing--there were eventually seven children--and his wife was not in good health. Moreover, although Elbridge was financially independent, his brother Samuel was having his financial difficulties in the hectic postwar fishing trade,\textsuperscript{9} and the Congressman-elect could have declined the post to devote his energies to redeeming the family fortune. The strongest reason for Gerry's not going to Congress was his political isolation. Both Sam Adams and James Warren had been defeated in their campaigns for seats in the national legislature,\textsuperscript{10} and Gerry probably realized how difficult it was to function without the support and advice of these political mentors.

Strong pressure was brought on Gerry to go to Congress. Samuel Osgood, staunch Massachusetts Federalist and Postmaster in Washington's first administration warned Gerry

\begin{quote}
8. There is no documentary evidence to support this, but Beard, Economic Interpretation of the Constitution, 99, hints at one.


10. Sam Adams lost to Fisher Ames in a campaign which centered on the need for drastic amending of the Constitution. See Miller, Sam Adams, 386.
\end{quote}
that he had to accept or be branded as un-American. Moreover, the new government was still only on paper, and during the process of putting it into operation, there would be a good opportunity to revise and amend it. "Critics", Osgood wrote, "are needed as well as supporters." Vice-President-elect John Adams also urged Gerry to go to Congress. Adams pointed out to his friend that he could ill afford to reject the opportunity to incorporate new views into the Constitution. Furthermore, his record to date had been characterized by negativism, and continuation of that policy, Adams warned, meant political oblivion. Such a course was unnecessary, however, because the country had shown that it wanted and needed a well-revised constitution, and Gerry could meet that demand while mending his own political fences.\footnote{J. Adams to Gerry, Feb. 15, 1789, Gerry Papers, LC.}

Elbridge Gerry felt impelled to explain to James Warren his reasons for becoming a Congressman. He denied having changed his mind during the campaign about the need to revise the Constitution along state rights lines, and expressed surprise at being elected while holding such views. Much more than a defense of political principles was

\footnote{Osgood to Gerry, Feb. 9, 1789, Gerry Papers, LC. For a good sketch of Osgood see Leonard White, The Federalists (MacMillan Co., New York, 1948), 13.}
Involved, however, for Gerry wrote:

"...Such has been the torrent of abuse against me that no person here will hear of my declining; my best friends say they will be sacrificed by my refusal and that I will be branded as an obstinate opposer of the government....Should I decline I am to be considered as a non-juror, as in Great Britain, or as an Irish Catholic, and sooner than so live, I would quit the continent. In accepting I see nothing but 2 years of extreme disagreeableness...."13

Gerry's reception in New York City, where the first Congress sat, was far from cordial. Old friends were cool and some remarks were passed in his hearing about political and social apostates, and the reluctance of opponents of the new government to face its supporters in open debate. Things were so disagreeable that Gerry wrote to Warren: "Whatever the state of mine can have on republican principles, I cannot separate from my mind the idea of degradation."14

A significant criterion of Gerry's political isolation was the way patronage was withheld from him. James Sullivan, a prominent Massachusetts jurist, enlisted Gerry's support for appointment as Federal district judge. The Congressman contacted several influential people in New York and Massachusetts but to no avail. The situation was

14. March 22, 1789, Gerry Papers, LC.
explained to Gerry by Samuel Otis who informed him that the Federalists were rejecting Sullivan because he was a radical, judicially, and an anti-Federalist politically. Moreover, Gerry's support was literally a "kiss of death". Sullivan, incensed at the character assassination methods used against him, became an ardent Republican, and, although defeated in the race for Governor in 1797, was elected ten years later. Gerry did not join political forces with the frustrated office seeker, but remained in close contact with him and often solicited and followed his advice.

Since Gerry went to Congress to amend the Constitution, he strongly supported James Madison's movement to have the House of Representatives consider a bill of rights. Fisher Ames of Massachusetts, destined to be Federalist floor leader, opposed such a plan and roundly denounced Gerry for trying to amend the Constitution before it had an opportunity to function. Thus the split between Gerry and the Federalists came into the open almost as soon as Congress

15. Otis to Gerry, July 26, 1789, Gerry Papers, LC.
17. The Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States (Gales and Seaton, Washington, 1831-43, 24 vols.), I, 80. (Hereafter cited as Annals.)
convened.

Although Gerry supported Madison, the member from Massachusetts clashed rather strongly with the Virginian over what the bill of rights should include. Gerry stated on the floor of Congress that although he had formerly opposed the Constitution, he now favored it because it was wanted by the people who were entitled to strong democratic guarantees. Madison agreed with the reasoning, but differed rather sharply with Gerry when he proposed that the House debate all the amendments recommended by the states when they ratified the Constitution. If carried out, Gerry's proposal would have literally turned Congress into another constitutional convention, for the suggested amendments affected nearly every part of the Constitution. Madison defeated Gerry's plan to drastically overhaul the Constitution by warning the House that such broad revision was unnecessary and to attempt it would probably lead to anarchy. With the Federalists so strongly opposed to any bill of rights Madison was fortunate in even having the clauses debated which ultimately were approved as the first ten amendments.  

18. Annals, I, 81-86; Elliot, (ed), The Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution (J.P. Lippincott, Philadelphia, 1836, 5 vols.), III.  
This defeat caused Gerry to set forth new reasons for amending the Constitution. He believed that if personal liberty guarantees were legitimate points to incorporate into the basic law of the land, then the states were entitled to similar protection. Of particular importance in this regard, Gerry stated, was the need to curb the Federal power to regulate trade and levy direct taxes. The Congressman also expressed concern for New England's economic interests, which he claimed had spawned the Revolution and were therefore entitled to freedom from new oppression. Despite the eloquence of Gerry's appeal, the House refused to consider alteration of the Constitution on state-rights lines.

Throughout the debates on the items which eventually became the Bill of Rights, Gerry continued to insist on a general revision of the Constitution. During one speech he used the phrase "several unworkable clauses", and Fisher Ames was quick to take it up. The able young Federalist roundly denounced Gerry's obstructionism and charged that

he did not want to give the new government a chance to work. Gerry made no direct reply, but the general debate became so heated that the matter was referred to committee.\textsuperscript{21}

A month later, when the committee reported the \textit{Bill of Rights}, Gerry presented to Congress a well-thought-out plan for amendments. For a starter, he proposed doubling the membership of the House of Representatives and giving the states absolute control over the time, place and manner of elections. Such an increase in the power of the states had a popular ring, and was a good beginning for Gerry's program.\textsuperscript{22} The key point of the Congressman's proposals was the suggestion that the state legislatures be given a conditional veto over certain financial measures of the Federal government. Such a repudiation of the "supreme law of the land" clause would have meant return of control of the pursestrings to the states and, for all practical purposes, abrogation of a main feature of the Constitution, for the proceedings of the Constitutional Convention made the point clear that the need for centralized economic management

\textsuperscript{21}\textit{Annals,} I, 662-663; \textit{Brant, Madison,} III, 268.
\textsuperscript{22} But New England Federalists opposed such an increase because they realized that most of the new seats would go to their opponents. See \textit{H.C. Lodge, Life and Letters of George Cabot} (Little and Brown, Boston, 1897), 39-40.
was the basic reason for scrapping the Articles of Confederation. Gerry's final point was a demand for abolition of the national standing army. He warned his listeners—many of whom had heard similar statements in the Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention—that military establishments caused unnecessarily high taxes which unduly oppressed the people.23

Fisher Ames rose to answer Gerry. He branded his colleague's proposals as unreasonable tamperings with the powers of Congress before it had a chance to function. As for state vetoes, Ames stated that such proposals were "ridiculous" because the Constitution had been written to provide the order and stability which the Articles could not give because of meddling by the states. Ames did not stop with a direct refutation of Gerry's proposals, but also attempted to discredit him as one who never had or would have real faith in the Constitution.24 The obstructionist tag stuck to Gerry throughout his Congressional career. Without Administration endorsement or Federalist Party support, Gerry's measures were doomed.25

23. Annals, I, 101-117; Gerry to S. Adams, Oct. 3, 1789, Adams-Gerry Papers, NYPL.
The Congressman from Middlesex tried to become influential in fiscal affairs so that he could curtail the power of the Federal government over the states. Early in the first session, before the Treasury Department was organized, the House constituted a Committee on Ways and Means to prepare a budget for the coming fiscal year. Gerry tried to do the job so as to revive the old Board of Treasury system. He believed that Congressional control of the national finances could be shared with the states if the Ways and Means Committee worked closely with the state legislatures. Establishment of the Treasury Department and the appointment of Hamilton as Secretary put an end to Gerry's plans.\(^{27}\)

States rights influenced Gerry's thinking during the debates on the Treasury Department Bill. He feared the Department's broad power to collect taxes, administer import duties and draw up the budget. Furthermore, the proposal to place the Department under a single head was opposed by Gerry who pointed out to his listeners that the Continental Congress had been unable to exercise satisfactory control over Robert Morris when he was in sole charge of national finances.\(^{28}\)

\(^{27}\) Annals, I, 231-232; Gerry to Wendell, June 8, 1789, Gerry Papers, LC; Gerry to Lovell, Oct.3, 1789, Gerry-Townsend Papers, NYPL.

\(^{28}\) White, The Federalists, Chap. X. For the broad powers exercised by Morris as head of the financial system see Sanders, Executive Departments, Continental Congress, Chap. III.
error was to place the Treasury under a three- or five-
man board with a majority of the members selected from
Congress. Although Gerry did not make the point in the
House, he also wanted the state legislatures to work with
the Treasury Board, thereby sharing control of national
finances. After considering the past record of Gerry's pro-
posed system, the House defeated it. Because of the re-
jection of his ideas, Gerry voted against the final bill.

The failure to revise the Treasury was extremely sig-
nificant. Gerry had a national reputation as a financial
expert yet none of his basic ideas had been incorporated
into the Treasury; in fact, the leaders of the new govern-
ment tended to ignore him completely. Furthermore, this
repudiation increased Gerry's isolation, for by not sup-
porting the Treasury Department, he alienated Alexander
Hamilton who was soon to become probably the most powerful
individual in the United States. This situation meant that
Gerry had no hope of entering the Department after he left
Congress in 1793, and, for all practical purposes, ended
his influence on national finances. The Congressman did not
turn wholeheartedly to the opposition party, but remained
an independent.

29. Annals, I, 383-389; Gerry to Wendell, July 1789, Gerry Papers, LC.
31. Gerry to Wendell, Sept. 3, 1789, Gerry Papers, LC.
Concurrent with the debates on the Treasury Department was the discussion of the tariff bill. The protectionist character of the House's thinking was immediately evident. Gerry spoke strongly of the need to safeguard New England's mercantile interests by placing low rates on naval stores, and no duties at all on molasses and sugar, the main products of the West Indies carrying trade. On the other hand, he demanded high duties on goods imported in foreign-made ships and on raw materials being imported while available in the United States. He made no mention of the diplomatic implications of a protective tariff, particularly in reference to the "most favored nation" clauses of the French Alliance. During the debate on the method of administering the tariff, Gerry again attempted to weaken the power of the Federal government. He introduced a measure providing for the states to collect the duties, and he defended the proposal by arguing that since the states had performed this task in the past, their already-established systems could do it cheaper and easier than the Federal government. This was a reasonable suggestion, but the hitch came when Gerry suggested that the states become depositories for the tariff money and have the privilege

32. Annals, I, 290 and 311; Brant, Madison, III, 246-247, 249.
of using it for current expenses with the surplus, if any, going to the Federal government. The measure was defeated, but its mere introduction must have given the Federalists some bad moments.33

The Middlesex Congressman was also active in the debates on the State Department Bill. To some extent his basic views on the subject were similar to those already presented in the discussion of the Treasury Bill. Gerry favored placing control of foreign affairs in the hands of a board of five or seven members selected from both houses of Congress. Such a system meant that the House of Representatives would have helped negotiate treaties, a procedure clearly not provided for by the Constitution. Gerry argued, however, that since the lower house had the sole power to originate money bills, and treaties needed money to be carried out, the House of Representatives had to share the treaty making power.34 This reasoning was an important forerunner of the debate on Jay's Treaty in 1796, but it was not pushed to its logical limits in 1789 because of the Federalist Party's control of the House and its refusal to

33. Annals, I, 365-68; Gerry to Wendell, August 9, 1789, Gerry Papers, LC.
34. Annals, I, 237-39; Gerry to S. Adams, August 3, 1789, Gerry-Adams Papers, NYPL.
consider theoretical points while the practical problem of establishing the new government was under way. Rebuffed in his effort, Gerry then tried to have the state legislatures pass on treaties after they were approved by the Senate, but this proposal was also defeated. With his views rejected on nearly every fundamental point, Gerry voted against the final bill.

States rights were also uppermost in Gerry's thinking during the debates on the Federal Judiciary Bill. As far as Gerry was concerned, the most fundamental question to arise was whether the Federal government should use state courts for all cases, except those in which the Constitution gave original jurisdiction to the Supreme Court, or whether there should be a separate system of federal courts. Gerry did not want all Federal cases heard by state tribunals because he feared that the national government might dominate the states' judicial systems. If the Federal courts were established, however, Gerry believed that their jurisdiction should be sharply limited so that most of the litigation went into state courts as non-federal cases.

In this regard Gerry was able to see great power reserved


for the states, for the Federal code of law for that time was relatively small. He voted for the final bill. 38

On January 4, 1790, Alexander presented his First Report on Public Credit to Congress. In it the Secretary of the Treasury proposed that the combined national and state debts of approximately $60 million be funded by the Federal government and be made the basis for increasing the amount of capital in the country. This increase in the quantity of money in circulation would, Hamilton felt, promote trade, manufactures, financial operations and agriculture. 39 The social, economic and political implications of such a program touched off a long and bitter debate.

Gerry was in basic accord with Hamilton's farreaching aims because he believed that a semi-permanent debt was the best way to develop and expand the national economy. The Congressman noted that England had greatly increased her national debt during the wartorn eighteenth century, yet she was in good financial shape because of the government's injection of interest payments into the business system. 40 This theory of "pump priming" was advanced

40. Annals, II, 1099-1100.
about 140 years before the New Deal.

In the beginning of the debates, Gerry opposed having state debts funded by the Federal government, and he tried to limit the discussion to Continental obligations. The Middlesex representative proposed that Continental notes be redeemed at their value at the time they circulated.\textsuperscript{41} In this regard Gerry was retaining the position taken during the Revolution and this stand was sound considering the inflation which had existed when the notes were issued. As the debates dragged on endlessly, and often aimlessly, however, Gerry reversed himself and suggested redemption on a sliding scale: original buyers to receive full value; holders as of January 1, 1790, 2/3rds of face value; and holders after that date, the real value of the note at the time it was issued. This discrimination, Gerry argued, was the best means of silencing the critics of redemption and of providing for veterans who had sold their warrants at ruinous discounts, and who now would have to pay taxes so that the Federal government could redeem them at an increased value for someone else.\textsuperscript{42} When the discrimination plan was defeated on several key votes and finally given

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{41} Annals, II, 1990-2000; Gerry to J. Adams, Dec. 19, 1791, Gerry Papers, LC.
\textsuperscript{42} Annals, II, 1270-80; Gerry to Wendell, Feb. 27, 1790, Gerry Papers, LC, Brant, Madison, III, 24.
\end{flushright}
up, Gerry proposed redemption at a flat percentage of discrimination, but this too failed to pass, and he voted for Hamilton's bill which provided for payment at full value.43

One of the most bitterly fought battles in Congressional history took place over the question of Federal assumption of state debts. Before definitely committing himself on the subject, Gerry solicited the views of several key supporters in Massachusetts. James Sullivan, already a leader in the budding Democratic Party, urged Gerry to support the bill. "The assumption of state debts", wrote Sullivan, "is dictated by justice and founded on a sound financial policy."44 John Wendell, a key Gerry adviser, also pointed out that assumption was a good move and added that Middlesex was overwhelmingly for it.45 And Sam Adams making one of his too infrequent recommendations to Congressman Gerry, suggested support of assumption.46

Gerry set forth some well-reasoned arguments in his

44. April 18, 1790, Gerry Papers, LC.
45. May 8, 1790, ibid.
46. May 6, 1790, Gerry-Adams Papers, NYPL.
set speech on the subject. Most of the creditors, he said, were soldiers, officers and suppliers of the means to win the Revolution, and surely these people were entitled to full payment of their notes. (Gerry made no mention at this point of the many poorer people who had been unable to retain their paper.) He further argued that there was no justice in redeeming the Continental debt at full value and then discriminating against the states' debts by paying only part of them. In order to support these views, Gerry shifted his stand on states rights. He belittled the possibility of Federal domination of the states, and remarked that the states would unnecessarily lose prestige if part of their obligations were repudiated while Federal obligations were paid in full. Moreover, the greater part of the states' debts had been adjusted to allow for wartime inflation, and as a result were fairly close to representing their real value at the time they were incurred. Furthermore, the Federal government could easily obtain the money to pay them by exercising the great tax powers which the states lacked.

47. Annals, II, 1281-1284; Gerry to Wendell, May 12, 1790, Gerry Papers, LC. (There is no evidence of Gerry's owning much state paper.)

48. Annals, II, 1290-1292; Gerry to Warren, July 7, 1790, Gerry Papers, LC.
Practical politics no doubt influenced Gerry's thinking, for Massachusetts had the largest unpaid debt of any state, and prospects were rather dim for paying even the interest, let alone the principal. 49

Gerry made no attempt to analyze the social and economic implications of assumption. He gave no consideration to the meaning of the Federal government's helping the creditor class to amass more wealth while the debtor class paid more taxes to make the rich richer. Nor did the Massachusetts Representative express any opinion on the great amount of speculation which had caused most of the debt to pass out of the hands of the poor and into the hands of the wealthy.

On the key votes Gerry supported Hamilton, 50 but he did not swing into the orthodox Federalist Party. Probably his independent position was personally gratifying, but it kept him from becoming a power in either of the

50. Annals, II, 1261-1299; A History of Congress, 227. (No evidence has been found of Gerry's having participated in the famous Jefferson-Hamilton bargain whereby Jefferson swung votes for assumption in return for Hamilton's support for the present site of Washington as the national capital, but Gerry knew of the deal and bitterly denounced it. See his letter of March 23, 1789 to James Sullivan, Gerry Papers, LC.)
growing political parties, and since the American government functions through a two-party system, Gerry's influence on national affairs remained comparatively narrow.

The Congressman played an important part in the establishment of the first United States Bank. As he had in the Continental Congress, Gerry favored a national bank, even though it was in conspicuous contrast to the states-rights position which he had assumed in the Federal Congress. Thus, it was James Madison who set forth the well-worn states-rights arguments which Gerry would normally have made, while Gerry seconded Fisher Ames' claim that the vast scope of the Federal business made a bank an absolute necessity. The Middlesex Representative also said that the Federal government had to have a financial institution to provide the cash reserves needed in times of national emergencies such as wars and depressions. Provision to guard against such problems was provided for in the Constitution's common defense and general welfare clauses. Yes, this broad construction of the Constitution came from states-righter

51. Brant, Madison, III, Chap. XXVI; Beard, Economic Origins of Jeffersonian Democracy, 152-155. There is no evidence of Gerry having collaborated with men like Ames except to support their views on the floor of Congress.

52. Gerry to Wendell, June 4, 1792, Gerry-Townsend Papers, NYPL.
Although such reasoning was diametrically opposed to Gerry's previous demands for protection of states rights and strict construction of the Constitution, Gerry had sound reasons for his position. He reminded the House that the Revolution had nearly been lost because of a weak fiscal system, and he warned that there was nothing in the new government to prevent a similar mess in the event of another war. To the argument that there were state banks which could handle Federal business, Gerry replied that if the states could charter banks to carry on their affairs, the Federal government could do the same. Almost incidentally, Gerry concluded his argument by advancing the "cement for the new government" theory which held that men of quality, wealth and position could be persuaded to support the Constitution if they were assured a financial profit. 53

Gerry took his own advice and invested quite heavily in Hamilton's bank. 54

Except for the settlement of the Revolutionary War

53. Gerry to Wendell, June 20, 1792, Gerry Papers, LC; Annals, II, 1893-1894; 1945-1951.
54. He purchased 96 shares then valued at $400 each. See the receipt dated Oct. 4, 1793 in Gerry Papers, MHS. Such support of Hamilton's economic policies placed Gerry far beyond the Republicans. See Adrienne Koch, Jefferson and Madison (A.A. Knopf, New York, 1950), 108-110.
debts and the United States Bank, Gerry was defeated on nearly every major point during his Congressional career. A notable exception was when he supported Hamilton's proposals. He had gone to Congress to revise or rewrite the Constitution along state-rights lines, but he failed in every key move, the implementation of the Constitution into a strong central government. The Congressman's efforts to carry out his program were, nevertheless, laudable, for he really fought for his views; no one can charge him with being a timeserving political hack. In establishing this record, however, Gerry had alienated both political parties: the Federalists denounced him and the Republicans ignored him. Only John Adams remained a close political friend, and this long, warm and close relationship going back to pre-Revolutionary War days was probably the main reason why Gerry remained in Congress as long as he did.

After putting up a strong fight for his views in the first Congress, Gerry underwent a surprising change. He had little difficulty in being elected for a second term but he spoke only two times in the entire second Congress and did not receive any important committee appointments.

55. Austin, Gerry, II, 37. Gerry's letters give no explanation of why he did not participate more fully in the debates of Congress after the executive departments were set up.
Several explanations are possible for this situation. Elbridge's brother Samuel went nearly bankrupt, and Elbridge devoted much time and energy to dealing with creditors and settling accounts. In order to provide for Samuel, the Congressman sought for him the Federal Collectorship of the Port of Marblehead, but political delays held up the appointment, and only a direct appeal to Vice President John Adams brought Samuel the coveted post.

A second reason for Gerry's withdrawal from public life was his lack of political contacts. Sam Adams and James Warren never came to Congress and the Massachusetts delegation was under the influence of Gerry's political enemy, Fisher Ames. In the final analysis, Gerry's short tenure in Congress was caused by the fundamental change in the American political system which was wrought by the Federal Constitution. The "new generation" of statesmen were able to adapt to a political order based on a strong central government. Gerry, on the other hand, was too attached to the state-rights and Continental system to be able to convert readily to the Federal way of doing things.

56. See Elbridge Gerry to James Lorin, July 8, 1792; same to John Lane, Dec. 12, 1793, Gerry Papers, LC.
57. E. Gerry to Adams, July 20, 1792 thanked Adams for his influence. See also Elbridge to Samuel Gerry, June 18, 1792, both in Gerry Papers, LC.
Elbridge Gerry retired from Congress when the United States was entering a critical period. A month before his term expired, France declared war on England (Feb. 1, 1793) and began the world-wide struggle which ended twenty-two years later with Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo. The young American republic, dependent on foreign trade for much of her cash income, realized that she could not take sides in a conflict between her two best customers, and attempted to remain neutral so she could carry on business as usual.\footnote{1} Such a policy was virtually impossible, for neither France nor England could, or would, allow the United States to trade freely with the other.

Legally, France had a good claim to American cooperation. Under the terms of the Alliance of 1778 she could ask the United States to guarantee her possessions in the Western hemisphere, grant preferential trade rates and maintain the dictum that "free ships make free goods". If adhered to, these points would have permitted France to draw freely on American resources without interference from Britain's navy.\footnote{2}

\begin{itemize}
\item\footnote{1} S.F. Bemis, John Quincy Adams (A.A. Knopf, New York, 1949), 33, 47.
\item\footnote{2} Commager, Documents of American History, 105.
\end{itemize}
Practically, however, the English had a better claim on American help. The United States was connected to the former mother country by economic, cultural and language ties, and, if these factors were not strong enough, there were always the towering bulwarks of the omnipotent British fleet to compel neutrality.

The United States tried to remain impartial, but despite President George Washington's Proclamation of Neutrality (April 22, 1793) she was soon on the brink of war with England regarding neutral rights and duties. In order to make a "package-deal" settlement of the crisis, John Jay was sent to London with instructions asking for British evacuation of border posts on American soil, compensation for maritime losses, and entry into the British West Indies carrying trade. Jay was able to incorporate these points into the treaty which bears his name, but in return made concessions which altered American neutrality. Of fundamental importance in this regard was the surrender of the "free ships make free goods" principle by allowing the British to seize and classify as contraband any American

5. S.F. Bemis, Jay's Treaty (Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1931) is the standard account.
cargo as long as she paid for it. Such a system was favorable to England and the United States, but it prevented France from receiving the commercial benefits of the Alliance of 1778. This change in American neutrality and French fear that Jay's Treaty contained secret clauses caused a severe crisis in Franco-American relations.

Publication of Jay's Treaty (July 1, 1795) shattered French hopes that the good will engendered during the first part of James Monroe's mission would develop into a more benevolent attitude on the part of the Washington Administration. In retaliation, and to protect her interests, France initiated an aggressive policy vis-à-vis the United States. Charles Adet, French minister at Philadelphia, was instructed to inform the American government that since Jay's Treaty violated the Alliance of 1778, France demanded

6. For the diplomatic significance of the mercantile arrangement see S.E. Morison, The Life and Letters of Harrison Gray Otis (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1913, 2 vols.), I, 50-51. Practically speaking the diplomatic arrangement did not hurt France too much because her trade with the United States fell off quite sharply, after the American Revolutionary War debt was liquidated by James Swan in 1796, due to unfavorable trade balances. See H.C. Rice, "James Swan", New England Quarterly, X (1937), 46-49.

as compensation that the United States revise her neutrality to permit France to outfit privateers and sell prizes in American ports. Furthermore, in order to be protected against any secret agreements which Jay might have made, France expected a blanket guarantee of all the rights acquired by England in the treaty. Until the United States acceded to these demands, Adet was to carry on newspaper attacks against the Administration's foreign policy and to support pro-French candidates in the elections of 1796. In the meantime, American shipping was to be harassed by maritime restrictions in a manner which was little short of war. The French demands were summarily rejected by the United States in the instructions given Charles Cotesworth Pinckney who was chosen to be James Monroe's successor as minister to France. The initiative remained with the French, however, who at first refused to receive Pinckney, and later informed the American that he could not have a


10. Department of State Instructions to Ministers Abroad, III. (There are no page numbers to these manuscripts which are in the National Archives, Washington, D.C. Hereafter cited as D.S. Instructions.)
residence permit to remain in Paris because he was an undesirable alien. Pinckney then went to Amsterdam to await new instructions from Philadelphia. 11

The tense diplomatic situation at the time of John Adams's election to the Presidency caused Elbridge Gerry to open a significant correspondence with the new Chief Executive. With scant preliminaries Gerry raised the important question of whether the United States was being unreasonable by refusing out of hand to discuss French complaints against Jay's Treaty. Gerry felt that the Franco-American crisis could be resolved peaceably if Timothy Pickering's rather belligerent policy was checked. To support this view, Gerry remarked that the Secretary was a leading member of the warlike and pro-British faction which had always opposed the French Revolution and was eager to go to war to stamp it out. 12 John Adams shared Gerry's desire for peace, but he did not want it on French terms. The President felt that a recourse to arms was a very remote possibility, if

11. Pinckney to Secretary of State Timothy Pickering, Feb. 1, 1797, Department of State, Dispatches from Ministers, France, V. (There are no page numbers to these manuscripts which are in the National Archives, Washington, D.C. Hereafter cited as D.S. Dispatches Country.)

the French would only talk the situation over. He also promised that Pickering's jingoism would be checked as soon as possible.

Encouraged by Adams's attitude, Gerry set forth fully his interpretation of Franco-American relations. He believed that since the French had done little either economically or diplomatically to help the United States after the American Revolution, they were no longer entitled to the preferential treatment provided for under the terms of the Alliance of 1778. Moreover, Gerry denounced French meddling in the election of 1796, and expressed concern for American independence if foreign nations were allowed to dabble freely in domestic affairs. These somewhat strong sentiments were mollified, however, when Gerry wrote:

"From principles of policy not of gratitude we accepted her ministers and her friendship. Now France has taken umbrage at the conduct of our government, the dignity of which must be supported, but in this regard ought not the greatest care be taken not to irritate France by carrying our explanations too far and too forcibly...?"

A firm, but cautious policy designed to maintain peace with

honor was needed, Gerry believed, because French military
might precluded an American victory. Thus Gerry was taking
a practical and impartial approach to a difficult situation.
Considering the deep-rooted partisanship of most leading
people at that time for either England or France, Gerry and
the President were refreshing exponents of the middle-of-the
road, America-first school of thought.

News of Pinckney's humilitating experience posed the
question of whether further diplomatic negotiations were
feasible. The Cabinet's views on the subject were given in
a memo drafted, at the President's request, by Secretary of
Treasury Oliver Wolcott. Although Wolcott did not complete­
ly close the door to further negotiations, he did not share
the conciliatory feelings of John Adams and Elbridge Gerry.
The Secretary opposed revision of Jay's Treaty for the pur­
pose of appeasing France because such a move might dis­
please England and thereby leave the United States alienated
from both powers. Furthermore, French revolutionary govern­
ments changed rather frequently, and whatever modification

15. Dated April 25, 1797, in George Gibbs, Memoirs
of the Administrations of Washington and John
Adams, (Printed for the Subscriber, New York,
1846, 2 vols.), I, 511-515. (Hereafter cited
as Gibbs, Memoirs.) See also Bernard Steiner,
Life and Correspondence of James McHenry (Cleve­
land, 1907), Chap. III. McHenry was Secretary
of War.
the United States made in Jay's Treaty to please the then existing order might not satisfy the next one. Still, Wolcott was willing to let France have exactly the same maritime privileges as Britain enjoyed with the proviso that the United States be permitted to abrogate the outdated Alliance of 1778 and to refuse to negotiate a new political or commercial treaty. Under no circumstances should the United States revise her interpretation of neutrality to appease France, or relinquish claims for reparations for maritime losses. Wolcott did not make the point in his memo, but, he, the Cabinet and the high priests of New England Federalism wanted a British alliance and war with France without any further diplomatic dickering.\(^{16}\)

Wolcott's memo revealed to the President the difference between his conciliatory views and those held by the Cabinet, and there was some question as to whether another mission would be sent. Both Pickering and Wolcott, however, were in the habit of consulting Alexander Hamilton on important matters of public policy, and he put his views before them with a characteristic energy which caused them to agree to another diplomatic endeavor to resolve the crisis. The former Secretary of the Treasury felt that such a move was \(^{16}\). On this point see S.E. Morison, *Harrison Gray Otis*, I, 59-60.
necessary to refute anti-Administration newspaper charges
of war mongering and of refusing to deal with France as we
had with England in sending Jay's mission. 17

After the Administration had decided to send another
diplomatic mission, Gerry continued to advise the President.
During the discussion over whom to send to Paris, Gerry
urged the Chief Executive to keep Vice President Thomas
Jefferson in Philadelphia where "...his pacific and level-
headed advice will be invaluable...." As for the fundamental
purpose of the mission, Gerry felt that it had to be based
on "Peace, the people cry for a peaceful settlement of this
terrible crisis which can bring them no good...." 18  Prob-
ably the best way to do this was to follow the views of the
House of Representatives. War, Gerry warned Adams, was
fraught with danger for the United States: the great
financial drain could cause national bankruptcy; public
opinion was anti-war; the clamor against Jay's Treaty showed
that the people opposed a policy which gave aid and comfort
to England; and French military power ruled out a clear-cut

17. H.F. Ford, "Timothy Pickering" in S.F. Bemis
(ed.), The American Secretaries of State and
their Diplomacy (A.A. Knopf, New York, 1926-27),
II, 216; Hamilton to Wolcott, May 11, 1797, H.C.
Lodge, The Works of Alexander Hamilton (G.P.
Putnam's Sons, New York, 1886, 9 vols.), VIII, 467.
18. Gerry to Adams, April 27, 1797, Gerry Papers, LC.
See also Gerry to James Monroe, April 4, 1797,
W.C. Ford (ed.), "Letters of Elbridge Gerry", New
England Historical and Genealogical Register, XLIX
(1895), 437.
American victory. Gerry also made the significant point that he was a man without a party, a political independent who placed country above personal considerations. In the scramble to select three men for what became the XYZ mission, such a position made him the logical choice for the middle-of-the-road, balance of power spot.

The nomination of Elbridge Gerry as minister to France aroused a bitter dispute within the Administration. There was little question about continuing C.C. Pinckney's appointment, while the selection of Virginia's John Marshall, who had attracted Federalist attention by his support of their conservative, nationalist and anti-French policies, was virtually unopposed. When the President proposed Elbridge Gerry or Francis Dana, Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court, for the third place, however, nearly everyone preferred Dana. The Judge declined the post, and John Adams has written that he then, "...called the heads of departments together and proposed Mr. Gerry. All the five voices were unanimously against him. Such inveterate prejudice shocked me. I said nothing, but was determined I would not be a

19. Gerry to Adams, April 30, 1797, Gerry Papers, LC. (Gerry wrote that the Federalists in his community refused to support him for office, and the Republicans were too weak to help.)

a slave to it. He was nominated and approved...."21 Gerry's letters to Adams must have set forth very clearly a policy favored by the Chief Executive or he would hardly have gone to such lengths to put Gerry on the mission. Moreover, although Adams knew that Gerry's sentiments were bound to be unpalatable to the Cabinet, the President knew him well enough to realize that he was not afraid to oppose Federalist leaders. A strong independent was needed for the mission, and on the basis of his past record and present views, Gerry was the ideal choice. On the other hand, was the President wise in his selection? Did he put his friend in an impossible position?22 Apparently Adams had some qualms about the situation for he warned Gerry that influential people were saying that he (Gerry) would never work with Marshall and Pinckney and would ruin the mission.23 To which the new minister

22. For Federalist opinion of Gerry at this time see H.C. Lodge, Life and Letters of George Cabot, 104-105. The note on 168-169 reveals that Adams and Cabot had sharp words over Gerry in 1795 and that Cabot was reluctant in 1797 to approach the President about Gerry.
23. Adams to Gerry, June 8, 1797, C.F. Adams (ed.), Works of John Adams, VIII, 547-548. (In view of Gerry's letters to Adams, the assertion made by Beveridge, John Marshall, II, 228-229, that Adams was uneasy about Gerry seems to be unwarranted. More likely Adams was giving some advice, not expressing doubt.)
replied: "The national honor and faith shall never be sacrificed by me in my effort to reach a peaceable solution of the present crisis...."²⁴

Internal evidence indicates that John Marshall drafted the mission's instructions probably in conference with Secretary of State Pickering. In Pinckney's instructions, the aim had been to vindicate, and maintain unaltered, America's position regarding neutrality and Jay's Treaty. The XYZ instructions, however, offered to modify the Treaties of 1778 to bring them into line with Jay's Treaty, a proposal which contributed little toward appeasing France considering British control of the seas. In return for this rather weak offer, the United States wanted to abrogate the parts of the French Alliance which provided for American guarantee of French possessions in the Western Hemisphere. The instructions then made a long review of the problems encountered by the North American Republic while trying to trade as a neutral power. At no point in this discussion did the United States relax her demand for redress of maritime losses or offer to revise her neutrality to permit France to use American bases for military expeditions.

²⁴. July 14, 1797, Gerry Papers, LC.
Hope for a peaceful settlement of the crisis was given a severe setback by the Coup of 18 Fructidor (Sept. 4, 1797) which replaced the comparatively moderate French government with one that was nationalistic and militaristic. This development made a deep impression on John Marshall who sent George Washington a long letter in which he bitterly denounced the illegality of the coup, the bills of attainder passed against the "outs", and the invalidation of properly conducted elections. These considerations made Marshall feel that the United States had little chance of reaching an honorable settlement of her differences with France. William Vans Murray, the American minister to the Netherlands and the envoys' host until they left for Paris, was also shocked by the forcible overthrow of the legal French government, and agreed with Marshall that negotiations were practically impossible.

Marshall, Pinckney and Gerry reached the French capital in early October and were soon seen by Foreign Minister

26. For the coup see Albert Sorel, L'Europe et la Révolution Française (Paris, 1904, 5 vols.), V.
27. Sept. 15, 1797, Marshall Papers, LC; Marshall to Pickering, same date, D.S. Dispatches, France, VI.
Talleyrand who informed them that he did not want to receive them officially until there had been an opportunity to explore the entire crisis informally.\textsuperscript{29} This was only an excuse for delay because the main reason for the exploratory conversations was to give Talleyrand an opportunity to "size up" his adversaries in order to determine how best to apply the "divide and conquer" tactics which characterized the XYZ affair. Talleyrand's deviltry began soon after the meeting when he used Tom Paine to make an unofficial offer of an unarmed neutrality pending definitive discussions.\textsuperscript{30} The way that the proposal was received showed that the Foreign Minister had made a sound assessment of the Americans, for Marshall rejected the proposal out of hand while Gerry wanted to consider it as a starting point for negotiation.\textsuperscript{31} Thus less than a week after their arrival, the ministers were split on a fundamental point, which was hardly surprising considering Gerry's correspondence with the President.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{29} American Ministers to Pickering, Oct. 22, 1797, D.S. Dispatches, France, VI. (Received March 4, 1798.) These dispatches were drafted by Marshall but signed by all three ministers, so Gerry assumed official responsibility for them.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Beveridge, John Marshall, II, 252.
\item \textsuperscript{31} The Journal of John Marshall at Paris In 1797 and 1798, Oct. 11, 1797. (The draft used here is the Library of Congress' photostat of Pickering's copy which is in the Massachusetts Historical Society. Unfortunately, the Journal has never been printed.)
\end{itemize}
regarding the need for a negotiated peace and Marshall's attitude after the Coup of 18 Fructidor.

Talleyrand began the real dickering by sending more unofficial offers through Messrs. Bellamy, Hauteval and Hottenguer (XYZ as Pickering named them in his report to Congress). They were excellent choices for such negotiations. Gerry had had business dealings with Hauteval after he fled from Santo Domingo during the slave revolt of 1791, while Marshall's brother had floated a loan from Dutch bankers through Hottenguer. At no time, however, did these earlier contacts interfere with the negotiations, and there is no evidence of either envoy being influenced by personal considerations. Still the previous dealings "broke the ice" and thereby paved the way for presentation of Talleyrand's disgraceful propositions.

The first of these was a demand for a full and formal repudiation of the anti-French statements made by President Adams in his Inaugural Address and his special message to Congress of May 17, 1797. Such a demand might barely have become a point for opening negotiations, but Talleyrand

32. Gerry to J. Adams, Oct. 20, 1798, Gerry Letterbook, LC.
34. James D. Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents (Bureau of National Literature, Washington, 1913, 10 vols.), I, 218-222; 223-228.
prevented any such development by stating that before the mission could be formally received, the United States would have to assume the debts owed by France to American citizens; pay the spoliation claims, and grant a large loan. 

...There shall be first taken from this loan certain sums for the purpose of making the customary distribution in certain diplomatic channels...."35 This was too much for John Marshall who wanted to suspend the talks and go home unless Talleyrand withdrew the demand for a bribe and received the mission officially. "Mr. Gerry", the Virginian wrote in his Journal, "was quite of a contrary opinion, and the old beaten ground about precipitation and unanimity was trodden once again."36 Apparently Gerry was willing to consider any point which might have led to formal negotiations, and, since the ministers had been in Paris for less than a month and were attempting to deal with a regime which had been in power for about six weeks, his position was not unreasonable.

The French gained a decided advantage in the talks when

35. American Ministers to Pickering, Oct. 22, 1797, D.S. Dispatches, France, VI. A financial arrangement was being considered by England at this time to ease diplomatic negotiations. See J. Holland Rose, William Pitt and the National Revival (Harcourt Brace, New York, 1924), 325.

36. Oct. 21, 1797. See also the entries for Oct.22 and 23. (How this could have been old beaten ground when the mission had just arrived in France is not too clear.)
news reached {aris of Napoleon's diplomatic victory over Austria in the Peace of Campo Formio. Bellamy gave a copy of the treaty to the Americans, and quoted Napoleon as saying that since he had conquered Europe, he was now ready to overrun England. Bellamy made no open threat against the United States, but the implication was obvious that the North American Republic ought to make a deal on French terms or be reconciled to war without British help. When this approach failed to alter the envoys' position, the bribe-loan demand was renewed, but Gerry and Pinckney rejected the proposal with the former vigorously stating that if France wanted war, she would have to force it on the United States.

The next day, Gerry began his controversial series of private talks with Talleyrand. At first, Gerry was frank with his fellow ministers and told them the Frenchman's new proposal which was for the envoys to advance $100,000 on their personal credit as the price of continuing the talks

37. For the Treaty see Rose, William Pitt and the National Revival, 327-328.
38. See ibid., 322-328 for Britain's plight: the Bank of England nearly bankrupt; the people war weary; and a French army poised at Brest for an invasion. See also Marshall Journal, Oct. 27, 1797.
40. Ibid., Nov. 2, 1797.
while one to them returned to Philadelphia to arrange a large loan. Although Talleyrand hinted that the alternative was an immediate declaration of war and confiscation of all American owned property in France, Gerry agreed with Marshall that the proposition was unacceptable.\textsuperscript{41} Up to this time, Gerry's differences with his colleagues had not split the mission wide apart, but Talleyrand had not yet told him that a loan was the \textit{sine qua non} of peace. In the meantime, as long as the XYZ people were making almost daily contacts with the ministers, there was still a chance to make a reasonable settlement. A talking man, even a diplomat, is rarely a fighting man, and Gerry was correct in insisting that the talks continue.

Meanwhile, although the mission maintained an outward show of unanimity, Marshall was becoming upset at Gerry's desire to maintain peace even on French terms, and he considered returning to the United States. Marshall doubted the sincerity of Talleyrand's peace promises and feared that the French were stalling until they knew whether Lord Malmsbury's mission was going to bring peace between England and France.\textsuperscript{42} If Britain did stop fighting, he believed that we.

\begin{itemize}
    \item [\textsuperscript{41}]{Marshall Journal, Nov. 3, 1797.}
    \item [\textsuperscript{42}]{Marshall to United States Attorney Charles Lee, Nov. 3, 1797, Marshall Papers, LC.}
\end{itemize}
would have to accept similar conditions from France or fight her without any help from England. For reasons unknown, the future Chief Justice changed his mind about departing, and the unofficial talks continued. Marshall's motives in this instance are not clear, but if he tried to force Gerry into adopting an anti-French position, he failed.

With negotiations stalled, Marshall wanted to present the American position in a note to Talleyrand. Gerry, however, did not wish to commit anything to writing which might be interpreted as an ultimatum, and even after the note was drafted, was reluctant to even review it. Finally, Gerry agreed to read it, but delayed taking action until only Marshall's threat to send it without his signature caused him to sign.\(^43\) As Marshall had put nothing in the memo which could have offended the French,\(^44\) the only reasonable explanation for Gerry's action was his desire to prolong the negotiations as much as possible in the hope that Talleyrand would change his position. Needless to say, such tactics hardly endeared Gerry to his colleagues.

Although the American memoir failed to break the deadlock, it did have a sequel which is too often ignored in

\(^{43}\) Marshall Journal, Nov. 4, 5, 8, 10-11, 1797.

\(^{44}\) Text in American State Papers, Foreign Relations, II, 165.
assessing Gerry's role in the XYZ affair. Less than a week after the note was given to Talleyrand, the Frenchman gave a dinner for Gerry and the three XYZ agents. "After dinner," Marshall noted in his Journal, "Mr. Hotengeur again asked Mr. Gerry to direct terms whether we would now give the douceur which had before been mentioned. Mr. Gerry answered positively in the negative and the conversation dropped." Thus his colleagues' opposition to a loan was shared by Gerry as late as December, that is until Talleyrand threatened in no uncertain terms that war was inevitable if the money were not forthcoming.

In another attempt to end the impasse, Marshall convinced his fellow envoys that a complete statement of the American position had to be given to Talleyrand. While Marshall was drafting the memoir, Gerry began keeping secret the points he discussed with the Foreign Minister. All that is known of the Gerry-Talleyrand talks of this period is that they caused the American to despair of ever reaching a peaceful settlement of Franco-American differences, for on January 8, he sent William Vans Murray a frank letter in which he stated that the mission, had for all practical purposes, failed and was on the verge of

45. Dec. 2, 1797.
leaving France unless Marshall's note changed French policy. The New Englander also wrote, however, that he had decided to remain in Paris as a private citizen and work for peace even if hostilities began. His decision was not based on a fear of American defeat, but on a sincere desire to avoid "...a conflict which will be desperate, wearing and costly." Thus were advanced two honest, but conflicting, opinions as to what policy was best for the United States: Marshall's view that war was the only solution to the crisis and Gerry's feeling that war was impractical and dangerous.

Gerry made some changes in Marshall's memoir before signing it and sending it to Talleyrand. Although the revisions are unknown, they could not have altered Marshall's basic arguments, for the Virginian made no mention in his Journal of any dispute with Gerry along that line. The note opened with a pledge of everlasting American friendship for France, which was a shibboleth subject to many interpretations and a key factor in bringing about the diplomatic crisis. American neutrality was then considered. Marshall quite properly stated that the United States had no legal

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47. Gerry Letterbook, LC.  
obligation to assist France in her aggression on England. Furthermore, neutrality was the only course for the United States if she were to carry on the "...great and undefended commerce...made necessary for her economic conditions and needs."49 The basic neutrality laid down by George Washington was still in full force, Marshall asserted, and nothing in Jay's Treaty should be interpreted as changing it. After a sound legal defense of America's right to make that Treaty, Marshall pointed out that regardless of "paper commitments" France and the United States had to realize that Britain's fleet controlled the seas and was able to enforce maritime policies based on her needs and interests. Therefore, France demands for the rights enjoyed by England under the terms of Jay's Treaty were unrealistic attempts to obtain privileges which she could not freely exercise. Still, if France insisted on being placed on the same footing as Britain, the United States was ready to discuss the situation.

Marshall's sound effort was given an insulting reception by the French. No formal reply was made, and a clerk in Talleyrand's office told Gerry that the Foreign Minister had neither the time nor the inclination to read long

legalistically phrased notes. 50

The XYZ affair then began moving toward a climax. Marshall became increasingly upset over Gerry's and Talleyrand's secret talks which he was now firmly convinced were being prolonged until the Franco-British peace talks ended. The Virginian also began to realize that he and Pinckney were being left entirely out of the negotiations, but he felt "...we shall be happy if without us, Mr. Gerry can negotiate a treaty which shall preserve peace without sacrificing the independence of our country...." 51 Talleyrand, however, wanted to make another attempt to exact a bribe from the ministers and raised various petty technicalities to withhold their passports. Meanwhile, Gerry, alarmed at the prospect, tried to have his colleagues agree to a loan, to be made after France and England made peace; or payment by the American government of its citizens' maritime claims against France; or an open-book credit for supplies for the French West Indies. The broad scope of these proposals reveal how desperate Gerry was for peace at almost any price. Marshall, on the other hand, rejected the proposals as insults

51 Ibid., Feb. 5, 1798. ("Independence", "Justice", and "Honor" are deadly shibboleths in diplomatic dealing because they are subject to so many interpretations.)
to American honor and independence. Again the issue of peace or war was clearly presented, with Gerry and Marshall retaining, unaltered, their views on the subject.

Before leaving France, Marshall and Pinckney, accompanied by Gerry, had another talk with Talleyrand. Marshall and his South Carolina colleague rejected the by then boresome bribe demand and asked for some other means of accommodation. Talleyrand refused to change his stand, and reiterated the points which he had made when the Americans had their first audience with him: a loan and repudiation of the President's warlike utterances. Clearly, Gerry's unofficial conversations with Talleyrand had failed to placate the French. This interview, which was Marshall's and Pinckney's last official act before leaving, firmly convinced the former that further negotiations were useless regardless of what Talleyrand told Gerry about the possibility of an honorable settlement. Moreover, the Virginian felt that the impasse had been caused by his Massachusetts colleague's disruptive tactics which he feared would seriously divide and weaken American public opinion in its support of the almost inevitable war with France. Unanimity among

53 Ibid., March 2, 1798. Following the interview, Talleyrand made a curt rejection of Marshall's memoir, AAE Etats Unis, XLIX, folios 234-237.
the ministers, Marshall believed, was very necessary if public opinion were not to be divided, which explains why Gerry's independent action was so repugnant. 54

Elbridge Gerry had a pessimistic interpretation of the situation. He felt that Marshall's position was needlessly leading to war, and he was not too sorry to see his colleagues depart. Peace, Gerry believe, was not entirely out of the question, and "...whilst I remain here", he wrote to the President, "it is my firm intention to prevent war as far as I have any agency....There is yet a possibility, but I cannot say too much of the probability of obtaining this desirable object...." 55 What the possibility was, is not known; Talleyrand had certainly not given much indication of relaxing his anti-American stand.

Before leaving, Marshall and Pinckney made another strong attempt to have Gerry go with them so that public opinion would not be divided over the question of a French war. Marshall in particular urged Gerry to realize the impossibility of dealing on Talleyrand's terms. Gerry,

54. Marshall to President Adams, March 4, 1798, Marshall Papers, LC. (Beveridge apparently made little use of this letter.)

55. March 17, 1798, Gerry Letterbook, LC. This letter might have been written to obtain authority to remain in Paris until Adams sent new instructions, but there is no evidence of Adams's indicating that Gerry could remain in an official capacity after the others left.
however, refused to maintain the outward show of unanimity and informed his fellow ministers that on the basis of the Foreign Minister's assurance that war could be prevented if the talks continued, he intended to stay in Paris. This delay, he stated, would give Talleyrand time to change his belligerent stand, or the Administration an opportunity to send a new minister or new instructions. So the unofficial negotiations went on, but with the understanding that Gerry was merely a private citizen who lacked authority to sign a definitive agreement. The desire for peace was Gerry's main reason for continuing the conversations.

While the XYZ mission was falling apart, the United States was completing her war preparations. Pickering sent strict orders to have the ministers break off diplomatic relations unless the negotiations were proceeding favorably. The dispatches telling of Talleyrand's bribe demand were published by order of Congress and judicially distributed by Pickering to whip up war sentiment, particularly in the anti-war South. The military establishment was expanded

57. Gerry to his wife, March 27, 1798, ibid.
58. March 23, 1798, D.S. Instructions, IV.
59. See the Secretary's letters which were sent with copies of the XYZ papers to various influential people, April-June, 1798, Department of State Domestic Letters, IX, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
the Navy Department was organized, public vessels were ordered to attack French ships, the Treaties of 1778 were abrogated and the Alien and Sedition Acts were passed. Furthermore, the United States began to work closely with Great Britain to protect trade from French cruisers, and opened negotiations for a broad system of cooperation in the event of a Franco-American war. Thus the stage was set for formal hostilities; all that was needed was a declaration.

The trend toward war, however, began to change for peace even though Gerry had some difficult moments before Talleyrand conclusively showed that he wanted peace. During the first month after Marshall's departure (on April 24, 1798), the French issued a new maritime decree (dated

60. For the war hysteria see Lodge, George Cabot, Chap. VI; Beveridge, John Marshall, II, 339-340; Morison, Harrison Gray Otis, 1, 100-101. The acts of Congress are in Joseph Storey (ed.) The Statutes at Large of the United States, 1789-1815 (L.&B. Evringham, Philadelphia, 1840, 5 vols.), III.


May 14) which closed continental and colonial ports to American ships and ordered their confiscation as prizes of war.\footnote{64} Gerry still did not feel that peace was out of the question and remained in Paris to continue dickering with Talleyrand.

Gerry's hopes for peace began to be fulfilled when America's war preparations and her flirtation with England caused Talleyrand to fear an Anglo-American attack on Spanish-owned Louisiana and Florida which he coveted as granaries for the West Indies.\footnote{65} In order to prevent the loss of these areas, and because he was making little headway with having Gerry sign a definitive agreement, Talleyrand made an offer to William Vans Murray to settle the crisis peaceably. Although documentary evidence to support the point is lacking

\footnote{64} AAE Etats Unis, XLIX, folio 364.
the Frenchman may have felt that the American government would be more receptive to a proposal made through a fully accredited minister and kept Gerry in Paris to carry a "last ditch" proposal to Philadelphia if the Murray talks failed. Gerry knew of Talleyrand's feelers to Murray and strongly urged his fellow American to receive them favorably if war were to be avoided. This consideration had, however, a relatively minor influence on Murray's willingness to consider the French offer which included Talleyrand's promise to pledge in writing that he would receive a new American minister and work out a fair settlement of the crisis.

Meanwhile, Gerry, feeling that he was not making any progress with Talleyrand, but that peace was assured, demanded his passports. Talleyrand did not give them immediately because he did not want Gerry to leave until he knew definitely that Murray was receptive to the peace feelers.

Four days after Talleyrand learned that Murray was advancing the names of possible men for a new mission to France, Gerry


67. Gerry to Murray, June 5, 1798, Gerry Letterbook, LC. See also Murray to Secretary of State, July 1, 1798, D.S. Dispatches, Netherlands, I. Murray felt that the United States had nothing to lose by at least receiving Talleyrand's proposition.
was permitted to go. He left Paris on July 26 and arrived in Massachusetts on October 1, 1798.

Gerry received a good idea of how Federalists were reacting to his diplomatic adventures as soon as he got off the boat. Old friends "cut" him, and rude personal remarks were passed in his presence. When Gerry reached his home, he learned that a mob of ruffians recently had pelted the building with rocks and mud while shouting obscenities at the family about how "traitor Gerry" would be dealt with when he returned.

The former envoy was also the object of a bitter personal attack by Timothy Pickering. The Secretary had been angered by Gerry's refusal to follow Marshall's lead, and, even before he returned home to present his version of the XYZ affair, Pickering wrote: "if they [the French] would guillotine Mr. Gerry, they would do a favor to this country, but they will keep him alive to write a la Monroe a book, which will equally express his misconduct...."  

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68. Charles Pichon, Secretary of Legation at the Hague to Talleyrand, July 5, 1798, AAE Etats Unis, L, folios 80-88.  
69. S. E. Morison, "Elbridge Gerry, Gentleman-Democrat", in By Land and By Sea (A.A. Knopf, New York, 1953), 193.  
70. Pickering to Rufus King (Minister to England), June 12, 1798, The Life and Correspondence of Rufus King (G.P. Putnam's New York, 1894-1901, 6 vols.), II, 347. C.W. Upham and Octavius Pickering, The Life of Timothy Pickering (Little and Brown, Boston, 1867-73, 4 vols.), is singularly unenlightening on this period.
Pickering's unofficial charges began in letters dated September 29 and October 3, 1798, but most of his case was based on insinuation. For instance, the criticism that Gerry knew the XYZ people personally, when linked with the private dinners which Gerry had had with the French negotiators, implied that there was something improper with Gerry's relations with the French, particularly when he tried to have his colleagues agree to a bribe. No mention was made, however, of Marshall's private dealings with Hottenteger on behalf of his brother. The Secretary's second point involved Gerry's remaining in France after having received orders to return. Even though Gerry pointed out to Pickering that he had left before the letter of recall arrived, the Secretary refused to accept the explanation, and continued to charge Gerry with gross disobedience of direct orders. Pickering made the main point in his case when he set forth the diplomatic effects of the minister's conduct. It must be remembered that the Federalists had been preparing for war for nearly a year, but a hostile

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71. To William Otis and John Smith, Pickering Papers, IX, Massachusetts Historical Society.

72. Pickering was referring to a letter of recall dated June 27, 1798, D.S. Instructions, IV, but Gerry left before it could have reached Paris. See also Gerry to J. Adams, Oct. 20, 1798, Gerry Letterbook, LC; Pickering to Adams, Nov. 5, 1798, C.F. Adams (ed.), Works of John Adams, VIII, 616-617.
public opinion, as shown by the House of Representatives, precluded an American declaration. Gerry's talks with Talleyrand after his colleagues left France and the long trip home, prolonged the crisis for nearly six months, and gave France an opportunity to decide for peace. Although the possibility of war was not yet fully past when Pickering began doing his best to ruin Gerry, prospects for a peaceful settlement of the crisis were stronger. Thus Gerry's procrastination in Paris, by delaying an American declaration of war, adversely affected Federalist hopes for a clash with France.

Of course, Pickering could not make these points publicly, but he did make them in his "private" letters and it is the Federalists' private correspondence which historians like Beveridge have used to ridicule Gerry's role in the XYZ mess.

Although much of Gerry's defense was presented verbally to President Adams, its main outlines are clear. The former envoy denied having attended private dinners at which

73. See Miller, Crisis in Freedom: The Alien and Sedition Acts, 156-158.
74. George Cabot to Wolcott, Oct. 25, 1798, Gibbs, Memoirs, II, 190. Marshall ran for Congress that fall and begged off helping Pickering in his movement to ruin Gerry except for providing a copy of his Journal for the Secretary. See Beveridge, Marshall, II, Chap X and Marshall to Pickering, Nov. 21, 1798, Marshall Papers, LC.
75. Gerry's home was about seven miles from Adams' and the two men were constantly together for nearly two months. Austin, Gerry, II, 301.
there had been improper discussions of a bribe. If any conversations on finances had taken place after Marshall and Pinckney left, they were held by private citizen Gerry, and he quite properly noted that no agreement had been made on a financial basis. In regard to remaining in France alone, Gerry stated that Talleyrand had threatened, officially, that war would result if negotiations were completely suspended. The Frenchman's sincerity on this point cannot be determined, but Gerry believed him, and that justified continuation of the conversations on an unofficial plane. Moreover, Gerry had legitimate grounds for bitterly protesting Pickering's methods, particularly the starting of an attack before he had a chance to reach the United States and present his side of the controversy. Unfortunately for history, Gerry never published a vindication of his conduct. He asked the President about writing one, but the

76. Gerry to Pickering, Oct. 1, 1798. America's need to make a British entente was greatly reduced when, on Sept. 4, news reached Philadelphia of resumption of full-scale hostilities between France and England. See King to Pickering, July 28, 1798, D.S. Dispatches England, VI. Thus Adams could afford to delay asking for a declaration of war on France because he knew Britain was a ready and willing ally whenever the United States needed her. Why Adams did not include a request for a declaration of war in his annual message to Congress (Dec. 8, 1798) would make a valuable study.

77. Gerry to Adams, Oct. 29, 1798, Gerry Letterbook, LC.

78. Same to same, Nov. 20, 1798, ibid.
Chief Executive, who cleared the request with Pickering, was sharply informed by the Secretary that such action would lead to further investigation and "...I believe Sir, that his conduct will warrant impeachment, or failing that, will expose the duplicity and treachery of this political appointment...." Pickering was basing this threat on Marshall's Journal whose existence was unknown to Gerry and Adams until this time. Instead of calling his Secretary's hand, the President advised Gerry not to press the issue and let it die as quietly as possible.

Pickering, however, had his turn at a public review of the XYZ mission in a special report to Congress dated January 26, 1799. The Secretary's rather high-handed attitude toward the President's request for an opinion regarding publication of an apology by Gerry, caused Adams to...

79. Pickering to Adams, Nov. 5, 1798, C.F. Adams (ed.), Works of John Adams, VIII, 616. (Italics in text.) The phrase following the word "treachery" may have been intended as a threat against Adams for his insistence on appointing Gerry to the mission. Curiously enough Adams' views on the French crisis at the time the mission went to Paris were not the subject of Federalist attack. Moreover, there is reason to believe Pickering feared Gerry's vindication would ruin any prospect of war with France. See Benjamin Goodhue to Pickering, Dec. 4, 1798, Pickering Papers, IX, MHS.

80. Adams to Gerry, Dec. 30, 1798 and Gerry's reply of Dec. 31, both in Gerry Papers, LC.
moderate very much Pickering's message to Congress. As a result, it was in conspicuous contrast to Pickering's private and real sentiments. Moreover, the review was based on Marshall's Journal which helps to explain why the Secretary's earlier views were somewhat different from those expressed before Marshall reported to the State Department.

Pickering's report covered the entire XYZ fiasco with special emphasis on Gerry's role. It began by discussing the controversial dinners with Talleyrand and his stooges. In this regard, the Secretary did not openly charge Gerry with deceit or treachery, but hinted that the former envoy had been remiss in not having the French put their bribe demand in writing so their dishonorable conduct could have been fully documented. Still, the Secretary had to acknowledge that Gerry had rejected a financial arrangement as long as his colleagues felt that way. As for Talleyrand's successful campaign to separate Marshall and Pinckney from their fellow envoy, Pickering had only contempt. "Unfortunately", he wrote, "Mr. Gerry was induced by threats..."

81. Text in American State Papers, Foreign Relations, II, 231-38. (When the mission's dispatches written by Marshall were sent to Congress, no commentary was included, probably because the pro-war influence of the letters fitted so well into Federalist hopes for war. Gerry's letters, on the other hand, were sound influences for peace and Pickering felt that he had to discredit them.)
of immediate war against the United States to enter into negotiations which hardly merited his attention."

The edge was taken off this criticism, however, when Pickering had to state that Gerry had done nothing inimical to American interests during the unofficial talks with Talleyrand. The Secretary then reviewed the Talleyrand-Gerry correspondence which had taken place after Pinckney and Marshall had departed. From the letters, it was obvious that the Frenchman had tried to induce Gerry to relinquish his private-citizen role and make a definitive agreement, but the documents clearly showed that Gerry had not overreached himself at any point, and Pickering had to admit that, technically at least, he had done no wrong. About the only official criticism which he could make was that Gerry's behind-the-scenes maneuverings had wrought no change in French policy.

All in all, Pickering's review was a sharply critical


83. Although Pickering had to accede to Adams' wishes for a mildly-worded report, the Federalist's private correspondence was far from mild. Benjamin Goodhue to Pickering, Oct. 30, 1798, Pickering Papers, IX, MHS called Gerry a "contemptible animal". Rufus King wrote to Pickering on Nov. 3 that "...he /Gerry/ is synonymous with wrong-headedness, folly and treachery..." Ibid. Remember that King had broken into public life under Gerry's tutelage during the Continental Congress era.
but not too unreasonable report of Gerry's activities, and it is impossible to charge the Secretary with being unfair. Nor can President Adams be criticized for failing to prevent even this relatively mild condemnation of his friend. After comparing the Secretary's earlier personal letters with the views given in the report to Congress, there is little doubt that the Chief Executive had well tempered Pickering's bitterness in the official publication on the XYZ affair. Of course Pickering's hands were tied when he tried to ruin Gerry publicly. The only way to do that would have been to assert that Gerry, by remaining in France, weakened popular support for a war, but how could Gerry be successfully criticized for wanting peace when public opinion was for it?

Despite Pickering's efforts, the Federalists still feared Gerry's influence on public opinion. George Cabot sent two leading members of the party, Harrison Gray Otis and Edward Robbins, to Gerry to determine what he intended to do. Cabot informed Pickering that Gerry said "...he was sensible of the predicament in which he stood but [did not want] anyone to suppose he could be made subservient to the designs of the opposition...."84

84. Cabot to Pickering, Nov. 7, 1796, Lodge, George Cabot, 179-180.
Many factors must be considered in explaining why John Adams did not decide for war with France, for, after all, the mission of 1799 was sent on his sole authority. Here are some of the influences at work on Adams. Rufus King's letter of June, 1798, which asserted that England would not make peace with France, reached Philadelphia on September 4. Thus Adams could let the French crisis run its course with the assurance that British aid was always available if we had to fight France. Moreover, Robert Liston's presentation of the British proposal for a broad system of cooperation probably showed the President that war with France was synonymous with a British alliance. Such an entanglement was very foreign to the Chief Executive's thinking. These developments very likely took most of the "bite" out of the XYZ fiasco as far as Adams was concerned.

Several people urged the President to accept French assurances for peace as the truth. John Quincy Adams sent his father a well-reasoned plea for peace. George Logan, although an unofficial spokesman, showed that there was no need for war with France since she was showing publicly that she was relaxing her war policy toward the United States.

Gerry's verbal reports to the President were not decisive at the time Adams received them. If Talleyrand had wanted to use Gerry as a peace agent, he would have given him the formal pledge to receive another mission, which he later gave to William Vans Murray. The fact that Talleyrand stuck to official channels instead of using Gerry seems particularly significant. Furthermore, Adams had news of Murray's dealings with Pichon before Gerry communicated fully his views on the situation. If Gerry had been a decisive influence, the President would have shown a more determined desire to make peace in his annual message to Congress (Dec. 8, 1798).

Nor should the influence of public opinion be minimized. Adams told the British minister that an alliance was out of the question because the people were cool to foreign entanglements and war.

In reaching a final analysis, however, recognition must be given to the fact that although historians attempt to rationalize the causes of war, international conflict is a

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87. Murray's first letter telling of Talleyrand's peace offer was received by Adams on Oct. 19 and "...had made a great impression on me", Adams wrote to Pickering. C.F. Adams (ed.), Works of John Adams, VIII, 691. Murray's letter of August 20, which included Talleyrand's signed pledge to receive another mission, was received by Adams on Jan. 21, 1799. Ibid., 693.

88. Liston to Grenville, Mayo (ed.), Instructions to British Ministers to the United States, 164, fn 62.
passion and, as such, defies conclusive definition.
Although the XYZ affair ended any possibility of Gerry's receiving political preferment from the Federalists, he did not make a clean break with the party. While Pickering's anti-Gerry campaign was at its peak, Gerry wrote Vice President Thomas Jefferson a letter in which he indicated the possibility of turning Republican.  

Jefferson, "...in a wily insinuating letter urged him to follow the example of James Monroe and John Randolph and place himself at the head of the opposition." The Virginian made his case with a statement of his political philosophy: a weak national government with the legislature supreme over the executive; a predominance of states rights; a cheaply operated system with few office holders and small armies and navies; free trade; no entangling alliances and broad guarantees of individual personal freedoms.

1. Gerry to Jefferson, 1798, Jefferson Papers, CIV, LC.
3. Compare these views with Jefferson's First Inaugural Address. Richardson, Messages and Papers of the Presidents, I, 319 ff.
Jefferson urged Gerry to publish an account of the XYZ affair. "Your fellow citizens", he wrote, think they have a right to full information in a case of such great concern to them....It may be in your power to save them these miseries of war by full communication and unrestrained details." The Federalists, Jefferson went on to observe, had curtailed their public attacks on Gerry "...from a principle of policy only and to prevent you from being urged to a justification of yourself."

Gerry did not follow Jefferson's advice regarding a public vindication because he had promised the President not to issue one. There is also reason to believe that he hoped to have Adams' support in the race for Governor of Massachusetts in 1800. For these reasons Gerry left Jefferson's letter unanswered for two years.

By the time that he was finished with national responsibilities and free to return to Massachusetts affairs, Gerry was a marked man—a Jacobin in Anglophile New England.

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5. Ibid., 335.
6. See Gerry to Jefferson, Jan. 15, 1801, New England Historical and Genealogical Register, XLIX (1895), 438 which begins: "By Judge Lincoln, my dear sir, I embrace a favorable opportunity of acknowledging your very friendly letter of the 26 of Jany..."
His mail was tampered with and his movements watched. He and his family were treated with the ostracism which narrow-minded bigots inflict on those who disagree with their petty ideas. Still, Gerry's reaction was beyond reproach. Where Pickering vented his passion in bitter personal invective, Gerry refused to lower himself to rabble rousing and made no attempt to exploit his personal services.

Gerry returned to the hurly-burly of public life in 1800 by running for Governor of Massachusetts on the Republican ticket. As was to be expected, he made no appearances at mass meetings, and distributed his views by means of newspaper articles, letters and speeches made by friends. Gerry's platform stressed local issues and made only incidental reference to the foreign situation; the XYZ fiasco came out only as part of a general appeal to turn out the war mongering "ins". Nor did the Federalists attempt to make an issue of Gerry's diplomatic adventures, a fact which caused George Cabot to write: "Deliberately or no, a mistaken policy has prevented public discussion of the conduct of Mr. Gerry; in

9. See John Wendell's reports to Gerry on the advisability of "playing down" the XYZ affair, Feb. 8-April 1, 1800, Gerry-Towsend Papers, NYPL.
consequence, he is less censured than he deserves to be among the small Federalists...."\(^{10}\)

The Republican candidate's chances of winning were so good that Federalists feared that John Adams was throwing the enormous prestige of the Presidency in his favor. \(^{11}\) Such was not the case, for although Adams had held off attacks on Gerry's conduct during the XYZ affair, he did not go so far as to give active support to Gerry, who was, of course, on the opposition ticket. Still, such open assistance was apparently solicited, for the President informed John Wendell that, "...I have as good an opinion of Mr. Gerry as you have, and I believe him to be my firm and unshaken friend. Massachusetts, however, has a good governor in Mr. [Caleb] Strong and I am satisfied with him in every respect as far as his governorship is concerned...."\(^{12}\) Despite his lack of open campaigning and Presidential support, Gerry put up a good showing and lost to Strong by only 5,000 votes out of a total of 46,000 cast.\(^{13}\)

\(^{10}\) To Christopher Gore, March 27, 1800, Lodge, George Cabot, 270-271.

\(^{11}\) Ibid.

\(^{12}\) Wendell quoted the President in his letter of May 12, 1800 to Gerry, Gerry-Townsend Papers, NYPL. Gerry was upset at Adams's attitude. See his letter of May 4, 1801 to Jefferson, New England Historical and Genealogical Register, L (1896), 27-28.

\(^{13}\) Austin, Gerry, II, 302; Gerry to Adams, Jan. 26, 1801, Gerry Papers, LC.
The maneuvering for the national election of 1800 began soon after the gubernatorial campaign. Gerry strongly supported John Adams and worked to prevent Massachusetts from splitting her electoral vote so that Vice Presidential candidate C.C. Pinckney would receive more votes than Presidential candidate Adams. The Federalists were defeated, however, and the issue never developed, but the desire of Gerry to help Adams' campaign was probably the chief reason why he did not close with Jefferson in 1799.

He did not, however, swing fully into the new President's circle, although he continued to correspond with Jefferson. Gerry reviewed the Republican leader's political philosophy, as given in his letter of January 26, 1799, and agreed with it except for the point providing for a small navy. He believed that until the Franco-British maritime struggle ended, the United States had to have a strong fleet to protect her trade. Some explanation was also given for not corresponding more regularly with Jefferson when Gerry stated categorically that none of his mail was allowed to leave Cambridge.

14. Morison, Harrison Gray Otis, I, 189. (This was before the twelfth amendment was passed. The Constitution originally provided that the two top candidates in the electoral college would be President and Vice President respectively.)
without being opened. Although the correspondence con-
tinued for several years, it did not develop a close con-
nection between the two men, and although Elbridge Gerry
gave nominal support to Jefferson as a member of the party,
no close political or personal tie was made such as existed
between Gerry and Adams. 16

There were several personal reasons why Gerry did not
close with Jefferson. His finances were in a poor state
due to long neglect during public service. The young family
suffered from ill health: Mrs. Gerry was an invalid and two
of the seven children were chronically ill. 17 These domestic
problems go far toward explaining Gerry's desire to remain
out of public affairs. Furthermore, his record shows that
by temperament and inclination he was no popular leader.
And, as he lived in a Federalist controlled community where
political unorthodoxy was synonymous with social ostracism,
he had no hope of winning local elections and making them

16. Gerry to Jefferson, Jan. 15, and Jan. 20, 1801,
New England Historical and Genealogical Regis-
ter, XLIX (1895), 438-439; L (1896), 21-24;
Gerry to Wendell, July 12, 1801, Gerry-Towsend
Papers, NYPL. Professor Dumas Malone in a let-
ter of Sept. 3, 1953 to this writer stated that
he found no evidence of Gerry-Jefferson col-
laboration after 1800. Jefferson endorsed James
Sullivan for governor in 1804. See Jefferson to
Sullivan, May 21, 1804, P.L. Ford (ed.), Writings

17. Morison, "Elbridge Gerry, Gentleman-Democrat",
190.
stepping stones to high office.

Although not actively participating in national or state affairs, Elbridge Gerry had definite views on the issues of the day. He supported Jefferson's reelection in 1804 and applauded the ideas expressed in the President's Second Inaugural Address because "I find his general system of politics is perfectly agreeable to my mind...." One of Gerry's rare public appearances was made in 1807 at a mass meeting at the State House in Boston to rally support for the Embargo. His opening speech stressed the need for peace and lauded the Jefferson Administration's policy of firmness short of war. Privately, he somewhat bitterly stated that the Federalists had never faced the French or British crises of the 1790's with such effective and forthright measures. Gerry's personal views were echoed by the state legislature which, at the request of Governor Sullivan, passed resolutions in favor of the embargo.

Federalist merchants, particularly in Massachusetts,

18. To Edward Granger, Dec. 6, 1804, Gerry-Towsend Papers, NYPL. Gerry was a presidential elector for Jefferson. See Austin, Gerry, II, 309.
20. To Fulmar Skipworth, Nov. 26, 1807, Gerry Papers, PHS.
were hard hit by the Administration's policy of non-intercourse which soon became a prime political argument for turning out the Republicans. The reasons for such a situation were easy to see. One third of America's ship tonnage was owned by Massachusetts citizens; the ship building industry was centered there; and the West Indies carrying trade was a lucrative source of income. These considerations united the Federalists, and in 1808-1809 caused the more radical elements seriously to consider secession as a solution to their dilemma.22 Gerry's personal views on the Embargo have already been given, but there is no evidence of his having exerted a national or statewide influence in defending it or in combating Federalist opposition.23

The death of James Sullivan in 1809 opened the way for Gerry's return to active public life. Why he did accept


23. Gerry's three letters to Jefferson, 1808-1809, reveal the ideas of an individual, not of a leader of a large and well-organized group. See Jefferson Papers, CXXXIX-CXL, LC. See also Sears, Jefferson and the Embargo, 68-70 for the way Jefferson worked with Sullivan in 1807-1808.
the legislative caucus nomination for governor is not too clear. His family responsibilities were still heavy, his business activities were widespread and he was 65 years of age. Moreover, the campaign for Governor was bound to be strenuous and demanding of much time and effort. Gerry probably accepted because his long record in public affairs, particularly during the Revolution, made him the most outstanding candidate to present to the voters. Christopher Gore, the Federalist incumbent, was defeated by about 3800 votes out of 75,000 cast.

The tone of the first term was set by the new Governor's opening message to the legislature. In it, Gerry dealt almost entirely with state issues except for a generally phrased hope for everlasting peace. Such a course was virtually dictated to him because the Senate was Federalist. There was surprisingly little criticism of the Republican Governor's record on the Federal Constitution and the XYZ affair.

Gerry's race for reelection opened the floodgates of abuse. Federalist talent and money conducted a vigorous campaign which reviewed and denounced the Governor's anti-

24. See Austin, Gerry, II, 303-313. (Shades of the Whig policy of presenting an outstanding national hero with a vague and hazy platform!)
25. Draft in Gerry-Townsend Papers, NYPL.
British and supposedly pro-French record all the way back to the Continental Congress. Of the many issues discussed, Gerry's support of non-intercourse as a substitute for war was open to the most criticism. However, the tone of the Federalist press in April, 1811, left no doubt that that party intended to nullify the Non-Intercourse Act if elected or resist its enforcement if defeated. Since non-intercourse's economic effects were mild, compared to the Embargo of 1807-1808, the people rebuked Federalist extremism by giving the Republicans control of both houses of the legislature and reelecting Gerry over Christopher Gore by 2,600 votes.  

With complete control of the state government in Republican hands, Gerry carried out a vigorous system of change and reform. On the state level a literal political and social revolution took place. One measure removed property qualifications for voting. Another law provided for state salaries for legislators so that many of the financially poor, and incidentally Republican, towns were represented for

28. J.B. McMaster, History of the People of the United States, III, 320-321; Austin, Gerry, II, 328.
the first time in many years. Probably the most spectacular bill signed by Gerry was one providing for a redistricting of the state so that Federalist strongholds were grouped in a relatively few senatorial districts. As a result of the "Gerrymander" law, the Republicans won 29 of 40 seats at the next election although the Federalists received a majority of the popular vote. The most significant non-political law of Gerry's second term was one providing for payment out of parish taxes of any minister designated by the majority of the voters in the parish. This was a serious blow at the predominant Federalist Congregationalist clergy who hitherto had enjoyed a virtual monopoly of public funds under the terms of the state constitution. Since judges were unassailable because of their life tenure, the legislature abolished all courts, except the Supreme Court, and created new ones to which good Republicans were appointed. Even state control over banking was revised to provide new posts for the party in power. This reform program began on a high moral plane designed to democratize the government, but well wishes soon gave way to petty politics which more than

31. Morison, "The Struggle Over the Adoption of the Constitution of Massachusetts", 310.
offset the good intentions.\textsuperscript{32}

On the national scene, Gerry's reelection enabled him to exert an important influence in favor of a clash with England, for "...before this", wrote Henry Adams, "this state \textit{Massachusetts} had barred the war to war."\textsuperscript{33} The Governor's intentions were shown in his \textit{message} of January 12, 1812 to the state legislature. In it, he sharply denounced the anti-war and anti-Administration factions which were dividing public opinion and preventing the President from pursuing a vigorous foreign policy against England. He also warned his listeners of the danger of a British-type tyranny in America if the Federalists had their way, and he called on the people to use their newly-acquired democratic liberties to keep the aristocratic Anglophiles out of power. "If Britain had been wise and just", the Governor asserted, "a war with her would be contrary to the interests of both nations....She has, however, adopted toward our neutral rights a high-handed policy which we must resist. In support of the conduct of our national government will not the citizens of this state be ardent to pledge their property, their lives and their sacred honor?"\textsuperscript{34}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{32} Morison, Harrison Gray Otis, II, 27.
\item \textsuperscript{33} History of the United States, V, 271.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Barry, History of Massachusetts, III, 367.
\end{itemize}
(The italicized part is the last section of the Declaration of Independence.)
Gerry followed his verbal pleas with concrete action. The Federal Militia Act of 1812 provided that the states should recruit an army of 100,000 men, but no provision was made for transferring troops raised by states into Federal service. Gerry, however, did not allow legal formalities to stand in his way and speedily arranged for mustering the Massachusetts militia into the Federal establishment.  

His message to the legislature accompanying the request for approval of the transfer included a vigorous defense of the Administration's war policy.

"We have been too long at peace; we are losing our spirit, our character and our independence. We are degenerating into a mere nation of traders. We have grown to manhood, and it will be shameful in the man to bear what the child might submit to without dishonor...."  

Although Gerry favored a policy leading to war with England, he could not compel the moneyed groups to follow him. A ten million dollar Federal bond issue, specially priced for purchase by large numbers of people, sold very slowly, and financial institutions were also not much help in making the war loan a success.  

35. Austin, Gerry, II, 375.  
36. Copy sent to William Pierce, April 18, 1812, Gerry Papers, LC.  
37. McMaster, History of the People, II, 368. The loan was very important because the non-intercourse orders had seriously reduced income from customs. See also Channing, The Jeffersonian System, 266, where the political situation as a cause of the slow bonds sales is depreciated.
Reelection time rolled around when Gerry's war policy was at its peak, and it became as important an issue as the political and social revolution during the second term.\(^{38}\) Gerry stuck to his regular campaign methods of making no personal appearances and of distributing his platform through personal friends and the press. This time, however, the Federalists fully mobilized their forces and elected their candidate, Caleb Strong, by the narrow margin of 1370 votes of 104,000 cast.\(^{39}\) Although Gerry was defeated, his vigorous war policy remained in effect until the spring of 1812, and war was declared on England before the Federalists could effectively revive their anti-war schemes. Some indication of the Federalists' attitude may be gained from the fact that the new Governor decreed a day of mourning for June 18, 1812, the day President James Madison signed the bill declaring that a state of war existed between England and the United States.\(^{40}\)

Gerry's strong following in a key New England state plus

\(^{38}\) Morison, Harrison Gray Otis, II, 37. Austin, Gerry, II, 370 feels the war issue was paramount.

\(^{39}\) Austin, Gerry, II, 297.

the insurgency of New York's George Clinton, which broke up
the Virginia-New York political alliance, made Gerry a good
prospect for the nomination as Vice President. The Repub­
lican Party caucus in Congress, however, passed him over in
the first nominating meeting and the honor went to John
Langdon, Governor of New Hampshire. Langdon's advanced age
and the fact that he was the only Republican governor in
New England, caused him to decline, and a second caucus
gave the nomination to Elbridge Gerry. Gerry was pleased
with the designation and considered it a just reward for his
having supported the Administration so vigorously.41

As usual, Gerry remained in the background during the
campaigning. "I cannot", he wrote, "alter the method which
brought me to high political office and make a direct ap­
peal to the voters...."42 Of the many issues discussed,
the Embargo of 1807 and the Administration's foreign policy
vis-a-vis England were most significant. In this regard
the economic effects of a war with Britain--America's

41. Langdon received 64 votes and Gerry 16 out of
86 cast at the first meeting. Barry, History
of Massachusetts, II, 373-374 and fn. 375.

42. To Edward Gillin, July 11, 1812, Gerry-Townsend
Papers, NYPL.

Henry Learned, "Gerry and the Presidential Suc­
cession in 1812", American Historical Review,
XXII (1916), 94; Gerry to Madison, June 14,
1812, Gerry-Townsend Papers, NYPL.
largest customer—were stressed as affecting ordinary seamen, laborers and farmers as well as wealthy merchants. The appeal was well taken, for non-intercourse had seriously affected all classes dependent for a living on foreign trade. As a result, the Republicans lost Massachusetts by about 25,000 votes, a defeat which showed how rapidly that key state's anti-war feeling had grown considering the fact that Gerry had lost only a few months before by about 14,000 votes. The overall national vote, however, led to Republican victory and Elbridge Gerry was the new Vice President of the United States.

Although, as was to be expected of the Vice President, Gerry did not have too much to do, he did participate in several significant affairs. After being sworn in, he broke all then existing precedents by delivering a formal acceptance address to the Senate. Most of the speech dealt with the war with England and revealed that Gerry was of the Western school of thought as far as the causes of the conflict were concerned. "...Is it not", he asked the Senate, "easy to foresee that if war should continue, the Canadas will be rendered

43. Gerry to Wendell, Sept. 14, 1812, Gerry Papers, LC.
44. See Sears, Jefferson and the Embargo, Chap. VI.
independent of her [England] and as a long time friend of
the United States, will no longer be instrumental in ex-
citing an unrelenting and savage warfare against our de-
fenseless and extensive borders...?"46

After this flying start, Gerry was soon enmeshed in the
almost petty activities which attend: presiding over the Senate.
As befitted his position, he had little to do with shaping
policy; he never attended cabinet meetings although as Presi-
dent of the Senate he was consulted on Administration mea-
asures coming up for discussion.47

46. Austin, Gerry, II, 385-386. For differing opin-
ions of the causes of the war see Julius Pratt,
Expansionists of 1812 (MacMillan.Cc., New York,
1925), who holds that the West instigated the
war to obtain Canada and to remove the Indian
menace; A.L. Burt, The United States, Great
Britain and British North America (Yale Press,
New Haven, 1940), who swings back to the neutral
rights and maritime issues which President Mad-
ison stressed in his war message to Congress
(Richardson, Messages and Papers of the Presi-
dents, I, 484-490). See also Louis Hacker,
"Western Land Hunger and the War of 1812", Mis-
sissippi Valley Historical Review, X (1924),
365-395. For a good historiographical essay
on the causes of the conflict, see W.H. Good-
man, "The War of 1812: A Survey of Changing
Interpretations", Mississippi Valley Histori-
cal Review, XXVIII (1941), 171-186.

47. Austin, Gerry, II, 319-329; Gerry to William
Loring, Sept. 1, 1813, Gerry Papers, LC; Ger-
ry to J. Adams, Dec. 12, 1812, Warren-Adams
Letters, Massachusetts Historical Society Col-
lections, LXXII (1925), 374.
The most important part of his work as Vice President was purely political. Custom decreed that the presiding officer of the Senate deliberately absent himself during the session so that a President pro tempore could be chosen. This was done because the law at that time provided that if the Chief Executive and the Vice President died, the President pro tempore of the Senate became President of the United States. In 1813, both Madison and Gerry were in poor health, and Gerry's substitute in the Senate had a good chance of succeeding to the White House. William Branch Giles appeared the most likely choice for the post, but he was not on good terms with the Administration which decided to prevent election of a President pro tempore by having Gerry attend every session. As a result of this situation, the Speaker of the House, the reliable Henry Clay, was next in line for the Presidency.

A careful examination of the scanty evidence covering the period of Gerry's Vice Presidency gives negative results. First, there is nothing concerning New England's anti-war and secessionist designs. Such a development is not too unusual considering Gerry's aloofness to popular

48. Learned, "Gerry and the Presidential Succession", 95.
Second, Gerry had a remarkably quiet time as presiding officer of the Senate; there were no flashes of the sparkling repartee of an Alben Barkley or any significant ties decided by the Vice President's vote. Thus Gerry's chief asset to the Administration was his staunch jingoism and his representing pro-war elements in New England on the highest national levels.

Elbridge Gerry died on November 23, 1814 while enroute to the Senate Chamber. There was a formal funeral, stilted elegies and a speedy return to business.

49. See Austin, Gerry, II, 394 for vague generalizations on Gerry's reactions to these movements.
Chapter VII
Summary and Conclusions

Elbridge Gerry was a leader in fomenting the Revolution, delegate to the Continental Congress, signer of the Declaration of Independence, member of the Federal Constitutional Convention, Congressman, minister to France, Governor of Massachusetts and Vice President of the United States.

As a young and enthusiastic revolutionary, Gerry gave sound support to the far-reaching schemes of Sam Adams. The ardor of youth caused him to move too fast at times, but Adams' careful tutelage prevented any permanent harm to his career. During this period, Gerry established himself as a "doer", an instrument of action, in implementing policy decisions established by others. His was the practical approach of a merchant applying business efficiency to public affairs. In this work, Gerry revealed a social outlook which was characteristic of the period. He favored a republican system, but he did not want the masses directly to control the political order. This explains why he advocated guarantees of personal liberties while building an order in which wealth and social position were the stepping-stones to office. This aloofness to popular politics and a strong desire to serve the people was incongruous, to say the least, and too often led to vacillation on key issues.
No man can fully serve aristocracy and democracy at the same time.

Gerry's political training in the Continental Congress shaped his later career. Congress functioned on the state-rights principle which meant that sovereignty rested with the state legislatures. Samuel Adams and James Warren handled much of Massachusetts's affairs, thereby relieving Gerry from the dickering and manipulating which makes a political system work. As a result, he never became familiar with the techniques of political persuasion, and never developed a set of loosely drawn general principles within which he could shift his ground as a given situation changed. In brief, Gerry was no real politician, even though he had to spend most of his later career in a democratic system where good politics were the *sine qua non* of success.

The New Englander's work in the Continental Congress was excellent. He brought to economic affairs a practical balance which well united theory and practice. His proposals to contract the currency and to enact price controls were sound solutions to the almost hopeless fiscal system. As for foreign affairs, the Massachusetts delegate almost uncannily predicted the woes which America later experienced by not putting a time limit on the French Alliance. As regards policy toward England, he shared a commonly held, but mistaken, view that economic considerations would compel
Britain to take a beneficent stand toward the United States. The most significant aspect of Gerry's thinking on foreign affairs was his desire to maintain a firm, but impartial, attitude toward all countries while carrying on business as usual. This opinion, which he developed in the Continental Congress, was of major importance during the XYZ affair.

Gerry's relations with military affairs during the Revolution, although important at the time, had little long range significance. Probably the most important result of his work in this field was a negative one: he did not form a close association with George Washington. Gerry's closeness to James Lovell, one of the prime movers of the Conway Cabal, might account for this, although there is no evidence of Gerry's participation in the movement to oust Washington. A more likely explanation is the fact that Gerry mistrusted large armies and feared a military dictatorship. Of course such a plan was foreign to Washington's very being, but, throughout the Revolution, Gerry had shown many times that he believed that the mere existence of a soldier in America was a possible threat to liberty.

The Constitutional Convention era is the nadir of Gerry's career. During the critical years prior to the Convention, Gerry missed the significance of the conservative reaction which was setting in. This accounts for his op-
opposing the Convention in the first place and his failure to appreciate the demand for a stronger central government. Gerry prospered during this period, which may account for his failure to realize the necessity for a drastic revision of the Articles of Confederation.

Gerry's work at the Convention revealed a lack of understanding of government and politics. No formal study seems to have been made of basic principles, such as James Madison made, and no theory guided his activities. He probably could have exerted a much greater influence if his thinking had been consistent. This lack of a general policy was apparent throughout Gerry's career, but at no time was it so obvious and so disastrous as during the Convention. When Gerry's attitude on specific issues is considered, the charge of economic determinism for personal gain may be rejected. Moreover, Gerry's almost pathetic proposals near the end of the meetings were designed to prolong the Convention in the hope that a state-rights Constitution would be drafted, and can hardly be taken as serious attempts to establish a new form of government.

Nowhere in Gerry's career was his political ineptitude more clearly shown than during the struggle to ratify the Federal Constitution. Failure to be elected as a delegate was a serious blunder; he should have maintained legal residence in Marblehead, where he enjoyed almost complete
control, until after the elections. The work before and after the convention was vigorous, but it lacked the official power which it could have had if Gerry had been a delegate. Moreover, although the vacillation and inconsistency shown during the drafting of the Constitution were not made public, there probably was some indication from Rufus King and Nathaniel Gorham, who helped draft the Constitution, that Gerry's open charges that the document provided for an undemocratic form of government and therefore should be defeated, were not at all consistent with his position during the Constitutional Convention.

The First Federal Congress was a fertile field for Elbridge Gerry to put into practice his state-rights views. His criticism of the bills establishing the executive departments was sound, even though there was a glaring, and unexplained, inconsistency in his support of redemption and assumption of Revolutionary War debts while opposing Federal taxes to pay them off. Moreover, Gerry realized that sound money, the United States Bank and a good fiscal system were necessary, even if such things were not compatible with his state-rights views.

Again, Gerry's insensitivity to party politics weakened his influence. He was soon persona non grata to rising young Federalist leaders like Fisher Ames, and never seemed
to understand or appreciate the democratic appeal of Jefferson. Independence was fine; it left Gerry free to act as he saw fit on any issue, but, in the final analysis, votes carried a policy, and votes were something that Gerry did not control.

Considering Gerry's fine work in the Continental Congress, his excellent financial experience and his keen desire to participate in national affairs, it was unfortunate that he was not able to obtain a policy making post in an executive agency, particularly the Treasury Department.

Gerry's work in diplomacy ranks as the finest in his career. He transmitted his views on the French crisis to the President and stuck by them through a long and trying ordeal. There was no need for war with France, and a more dispassionate approach to the situation would have made the point abundantly clear to Federalist jingoists. Gerry's analysis of French military might and of the impossibility of America's winning a decisive victory was a sound interpretation of the crisis. This did not mean that Gerry was a Francophile, but rather that he placed his country's needs and interests before his own personal career.

While the XYZ ministers were going through hell trying to deal with the nimble-minded Talleyrand, Gerry's acts were reasonable only if his pre-mission determination to
maintain peace is kept in mind. Diplomatic protocol can probably be interpreted to condemn his private talks with Talleyrand as well as his almost fanatical attempts to start formal negotiations, but the moral desire to avoid a long, bloody, and, at best, indecisive conflict was sound.

Although the extent of Gerry's influence on John Adams in restoring peaceful relations is not entirely clear, it was no doubt important. The two men were close friends and held precisely the same views on foreign policy, which explains why the President went to such great lengths to put Gerry on the mission. Whether Adams sanctioned such extreme measures as Gerry's remaining in Paris after Marshall and Pinckney left is unknown, but the need for drastic action was probably indicated by Adams in private talks with Gerry before he went to France.

The President's refusal to halt completely Pickering's personal and official castigation of Gerry was hardly to his credit. He had to touch off a political tempest in 1799 in order to send another mission to France, so why did he not put his foot down much earlier? The vague and indecisive support which Adams gave Gerry by modifying Pickering's report to Congress was minor when compared to the personal abuse borne in silence by the former minister. The situation resembles too much the age old policy of sending an agent on
a difficult mission and then publicly repudiating him when he is caught in a compromising situation.

Gerry's last fifteen years are almost anti-climactic in comparison to the XYZ affair. His refusal to swing fully into Thomas Jefferson's circle was probably caused by an unwillingness to participate openly and actively in party politics. Furthermore, his nomination and election as governor in 1810 were apparently carried out without too much personal effort on his part. Still, in terms of national issues, it is apparent that Gerry's influence was practically non-existent. Probably the most important work that he performed as governor was to frustrate Federalist anti-war schemes until hostilities actually began. Who can say what the Hartford Convention would have led to, if it had met in 1812 instead of 1814? The domestic reform program carried out during the second term was spectacular, but it was too obviously based on partisan politics which is hardly a sound basis for reform.

In reviewing Gerry's career, certain personal characteristics are apparent. His mental processes were probably conditioned by his background. As the son of a self-made man, he rose to economic and social prominence in the fishing town of Marblehead where the sharpness and astuteness of a Yankee trader were ingrained into his personality. In part
because of his background, Gerry tended to be overly sus-
picious and mistrustful of people, even his closest as-
associates. Unfortunately, he was unable to conceal his at-
titude and, as a result, did not make many friends in pub-
lic life.

Along with this personal coolness went an obstinacy
which led to much adverse criticism. No one can deny that
Gerry clung to ideas and principles until long after they
were outdated. To put the most charitable light on this
characteristic would be to call it the result of a policy
of making a long and careful study of a problem before tak-
ing a stand on it. There is little evidence, however, of
such a process being followed on major issues.

In the final analysis, Gerry made some worthwhile con-
tributions to his nation's welfare, but he was never able
to unite his basic instincts with his convictions, nor his
New England social position and outlook with practical
politics.
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The papers in the Library of Congress consist largely of materials deposited by Senator Gerry in 1939. Many of them are copies of originals held by private individuals. Every conceivable subject is covered, including material from the papers of other public figures, notably John Adams. There is also a letterbook for the XYZ period.

At the Pennsylvania Historical Society are approximately seventy-five Gerry letters written during his career prior to 1800. The Massachusetts Historical Society has letters dealing with family finances, particularly the affairs of Samuel Russell Gerry. Most of the manuscripts deal with public matters. Account books, business files and ledgers are at the Marblehead Historical Society, and since they concern primarily private matters, have not been consulted.

The New York Public Library has two major collections: those in the Samuel Adams Papers and those in the Townsend Collection. Much valuable material on Gerry's role in the
Revolution is in Adams' letters, but Adams died in 1803 and Gerry's papers end at that time. The Townsend papers derive their title from one of Gerry's ancestors. These manuscripts include letters about Gerry as well as those written by him or to him.

On the whole, the extant manuscripts are not as complete as those of other public figures even though there are a large number of single items. An exception is 1797-1800, the XYZ period. Moreover, it is obvious that James Austin or some descendant of Gerry has edited the papers, probably with the intention of preparing a biography. Still, there were enough unrestricted papers available for historians such as Albert Beveridge to consult and thereby avoid giving a one-sided picture of Gerry's public career.

Several printed sources merit mention at this point. James Austin was intimately connected with Gerry after 1790, and married his daughter. Austin became his father-in-law's literary executor and wrote a two-volume biography which prints some source material, but which is extremely reticent about most of the more controversial phases of Gerry's career. Probably the most significant single collection of Gerry's writings is in E.C. Burnett, Letters of Members of the Continental Congress. It gives nearly all the correspondence between Gerry and Joseph Trumbull during the Revolution as
as the Massachusetts's delegations' reports to the state legislature until 1787. Worthington C. Ford edited several important letters which are printed in the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, XLIX (1895), 430-441, and L, (1896), 21-30. The letters for 1813 and 1814 which are in Massachusetts Historical Society *Proceedings*, XLVII (1913), 480-528 are purely social chit-chat and pleasantries to Gerry's children.

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Autobiography

I, Eugene Francis Kramer, was born in New York City on September 9, 1921. I received my secondary education in the public schools of Rochester, New York. My undergraduate training was received at the University of Rochester where I received the degree Bachelor of Science in Education in February, 1947. From the same University, I received the degree Master of Arts in History in 1948. I entered The Ohio State University in 1948 and served as teaching assistant in the History Department for the year 1949-1950.